



TRAVELER

ALL TRAVEL, ALL THE TIME | July-August 2011

Milan's BIG HEART

Italy's Design
Capital Reveals
its Soul

PAGE 62

Last Goodbye in Thailand

PAGE 74

PHILLY FLIES

WHERE INDIE
SPIRIT RULES

PAGE 47

YOSEMITE REDISCOVERED (AT NIGHT)

PAGE 85

OUR FAVORITE NATIONAL PARK

PAGE 16

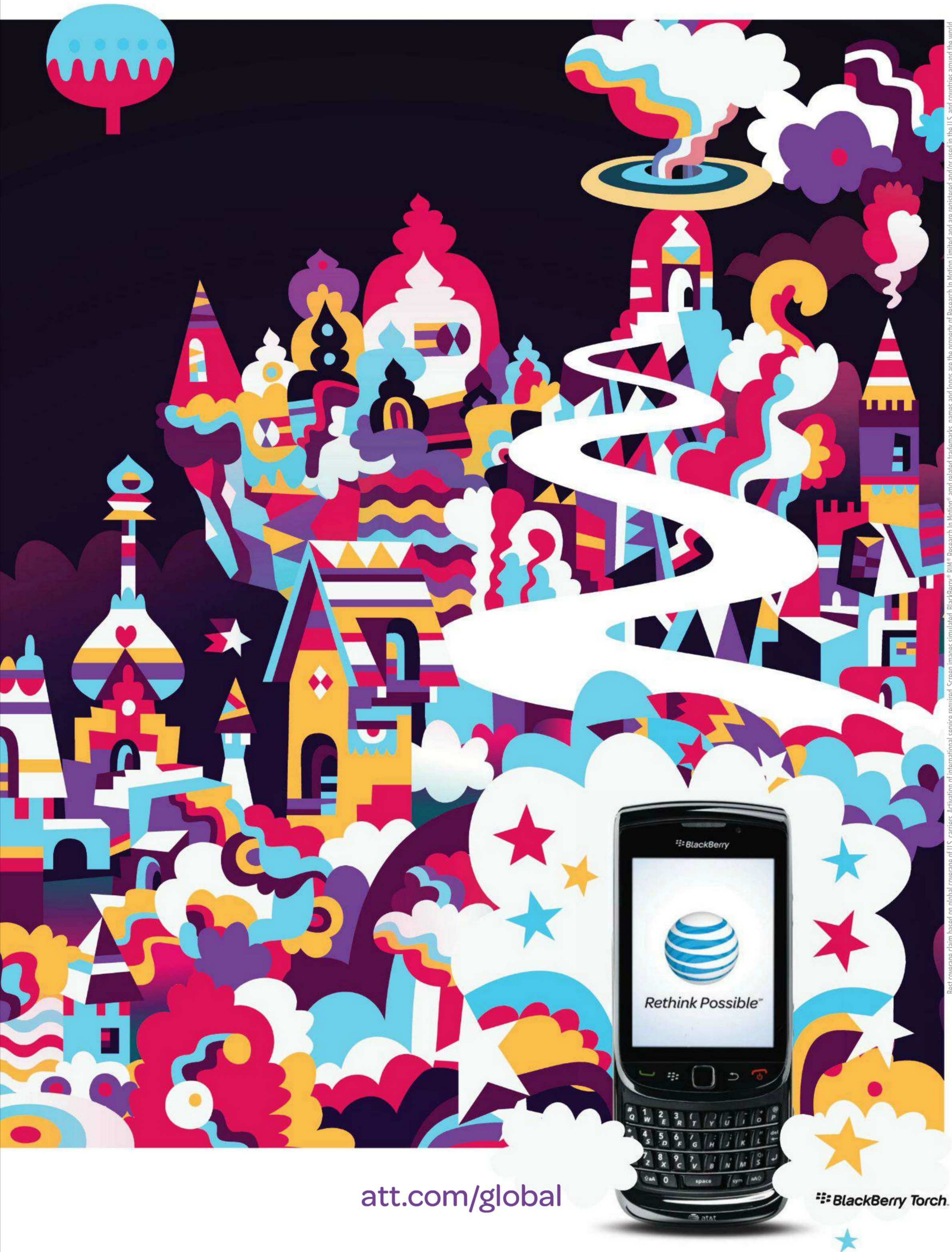
EUREKA!

BEST OF AMERICA'S SUMMER PAGE 28

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STAY

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INKATERRA.COM

DINE

Cusco's **La Chola** restaurant features upscale Peruvian cuisine and local wines in a romantic ambience.

CASACARTAGENA.COM

Located in a Colonial house in Cusco, the elegant **Cicciolina** serves contemporary fare and tapas; good for breakfast, too.

CICCIOLINACUZCO.COM

SHOP

A two-hour bus ride from Cusco, the **Pisac Sunday Market** offers handicrafts and photo ops in a picturesque village (also open Tuesday and Thursday mornings).

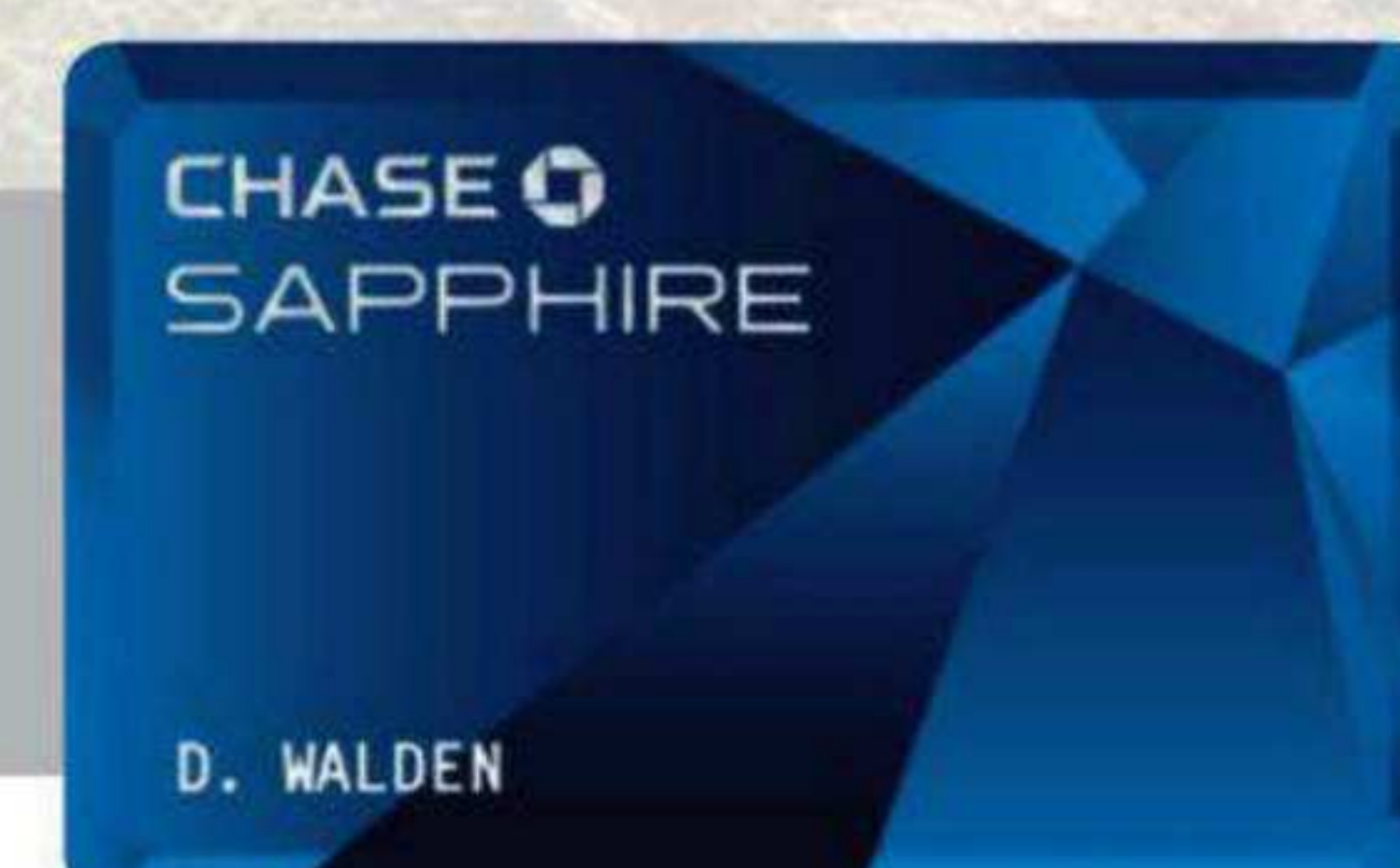
The **Center for Traditional Textiles** in Cusco documents traditional Andean weaving techniques and sells striking textiles in its gift shop.

INCAS.ORG

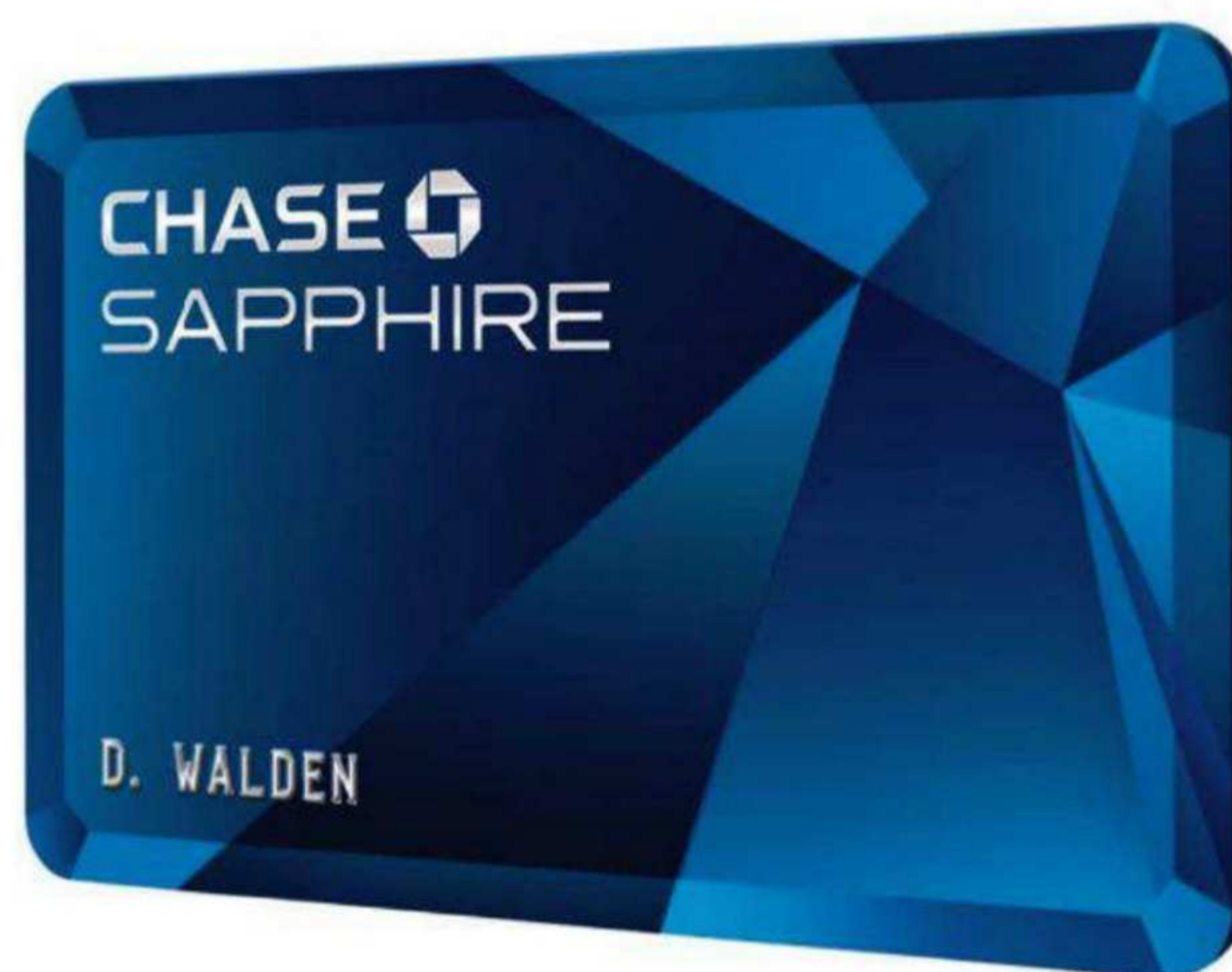
A llama grazes at Machu Picchu, Peru.



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GET OUT OF TOWN.



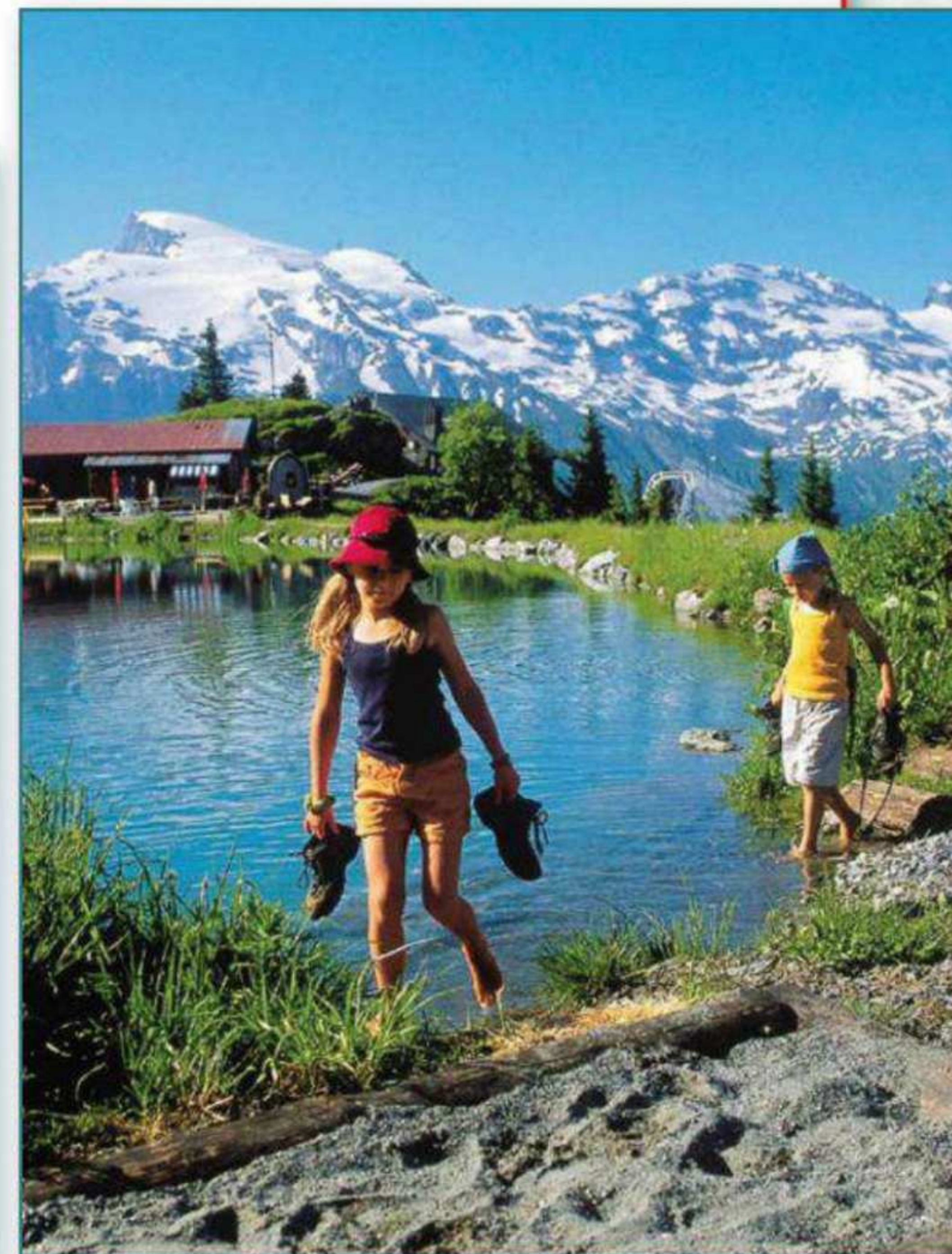
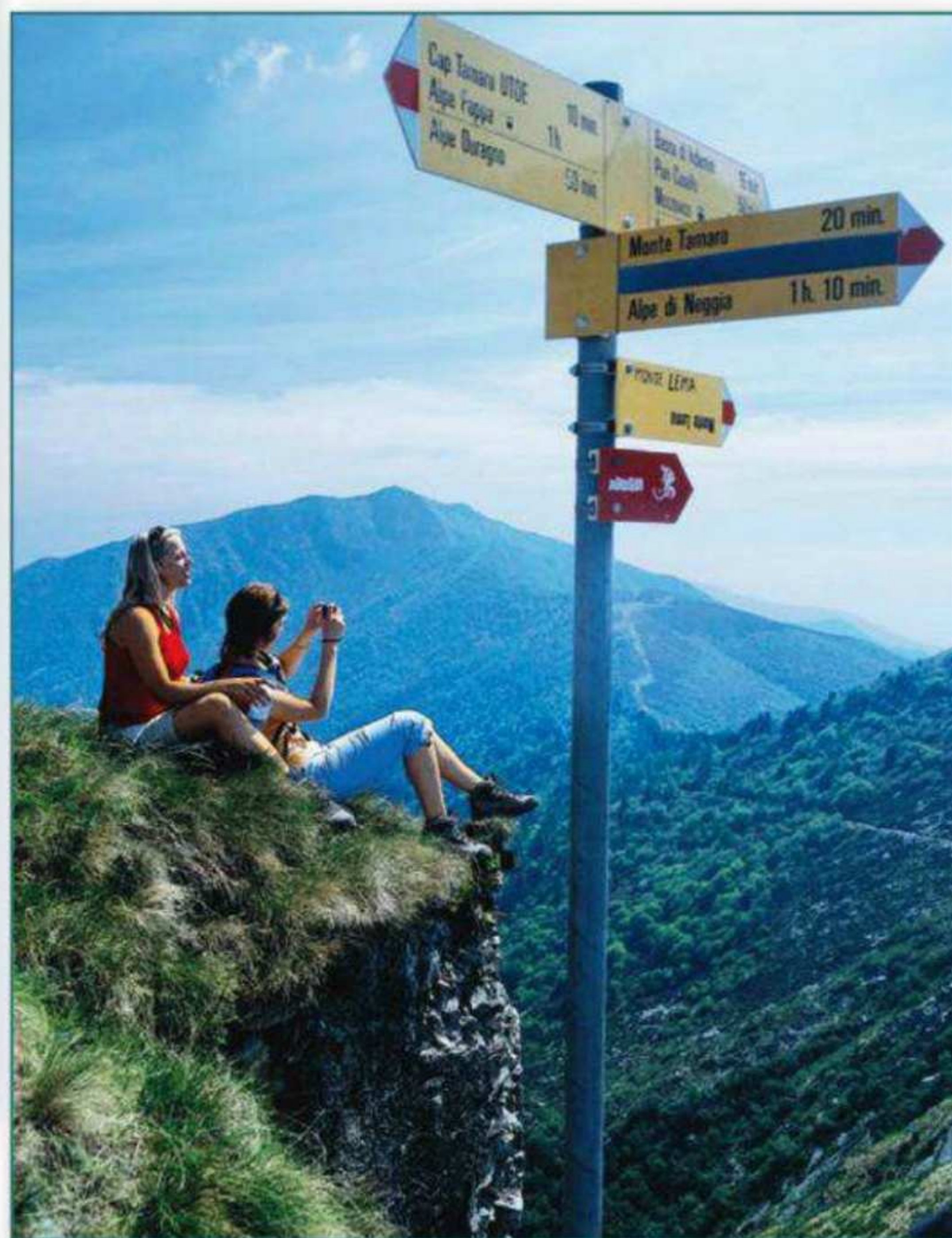
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Discover Switzerland's Splendors on Foot

Hiking in the Swiss Alps is pure pleasure—mountains at their most magnificent and nature at its most glorious. The wonders of this high, dramatic world, with its natural diversity and beautiful scenery, are revealed best when you travel on foot. And with an unrivaled network of more than 3,700 miles of footpaths crisscrossing Switzerland, you can choose the trail best suited to you.

Whether you're looking for a leisurely riverside ramble the whole family can enjoy, a challenging hike in the mountains, or a day in a park, you can find what you're after by letting the distinctive yellow signposts of SwitzerlandMobility guide your way. This national network for nonmotorized traffic features enticing pathways designed so that hikers, bikers, canoeists, and even inline skaters can enjoy Switzerland. Best of all, SwitzerlandMobility offers bookable packages that include luggage transport, so you can explore national or regional routes carefree, and your luggage will meet you when you arrive at your destination. Now is the time to get away from it all, and refresh your spirits in the high wide wonders of the Swiss Alps.



"In my years as a travel writer, the most pleasurable assignments involved hiking in the Swiss Alps. Somehow those fabulous mountains are like a tonic for the soul. You can hike to your heart's content, along paths where it's just you and the chamois and the wildflowers, or wander from one storybook village to the next on foot. And everywhere you go, the food is superb, and the inns welcome you with a cozy elegance that reflects generations of hospitality."

—K.M. Kostyal, National Geographic Society Contributor



Switzerland.
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JULY-AUGUST 2011, VOLUME 28, NUMBER 5

CONTENTS

 NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER

62 | Milano, Ti Amo

Milan sheds its initial reserve to reveal an Italian city with a forward-looking view, movie-star style, art of all kinds—and a big, passionate heart.

Story by TOM MUELLER

Photographs by DAVE YODER



74 | Last Goodbye in Chiang Mai

A son journeys to Thailand's cultural epicenter for traditional hill tribes, spicy food to set your mouth afire, and a bittersweet meeting with his father.

Story by CARL HOFFMAN

Photographs by PALANI MOHAN

85 | Star Trek: Yosemite to the Moon

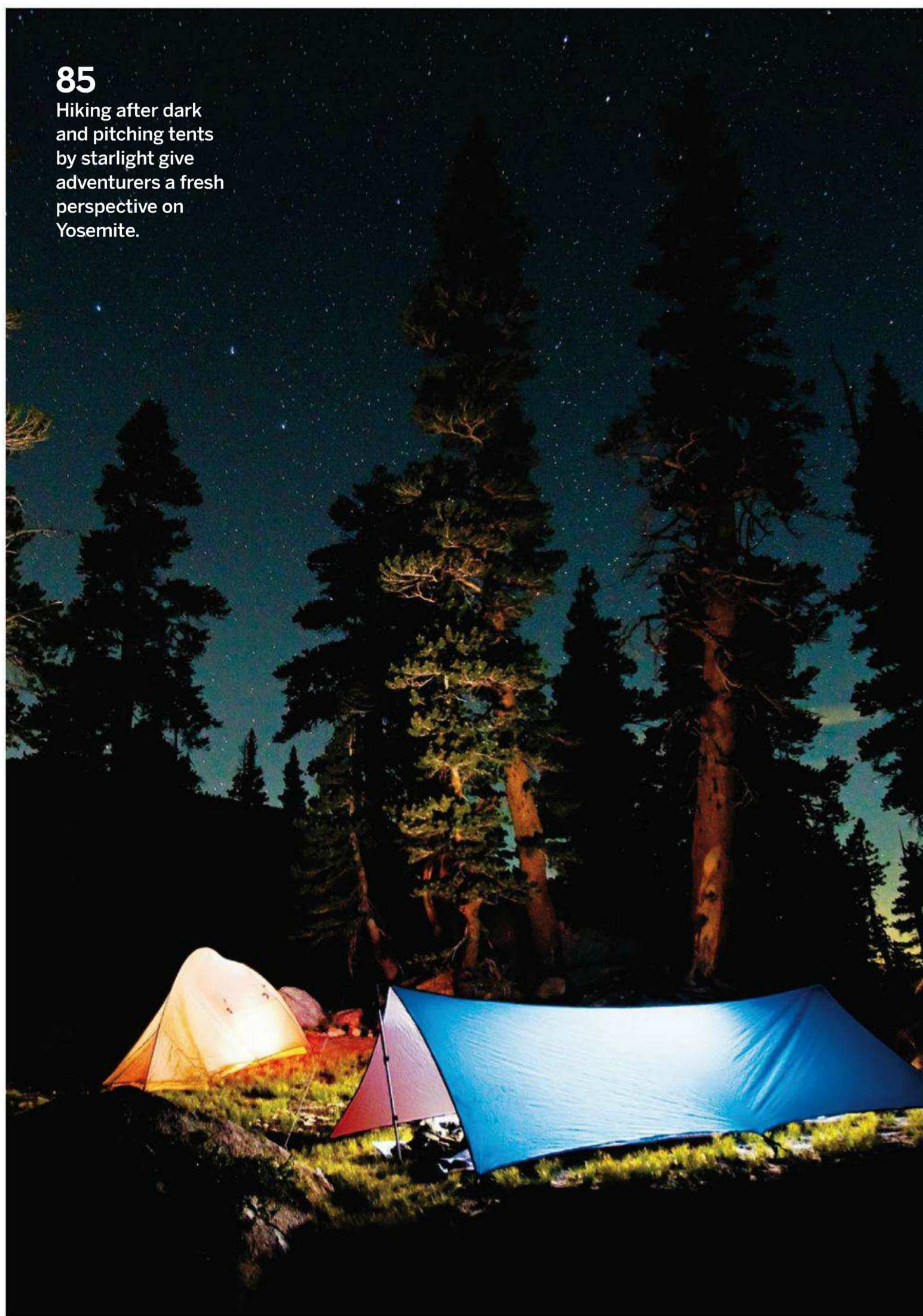
Tackling the John Muir Trail at night with only stars and moon to light the path, a veteran hiker experiences popular Yosemite National Park in a new—and wilder—way.

Story by JAMES VLAHOS

Photographs by DMITRI ALEXANDER

85

Hiking after dark and pitching tents by starlight give adventurers a fresh perspective on Yosemite.

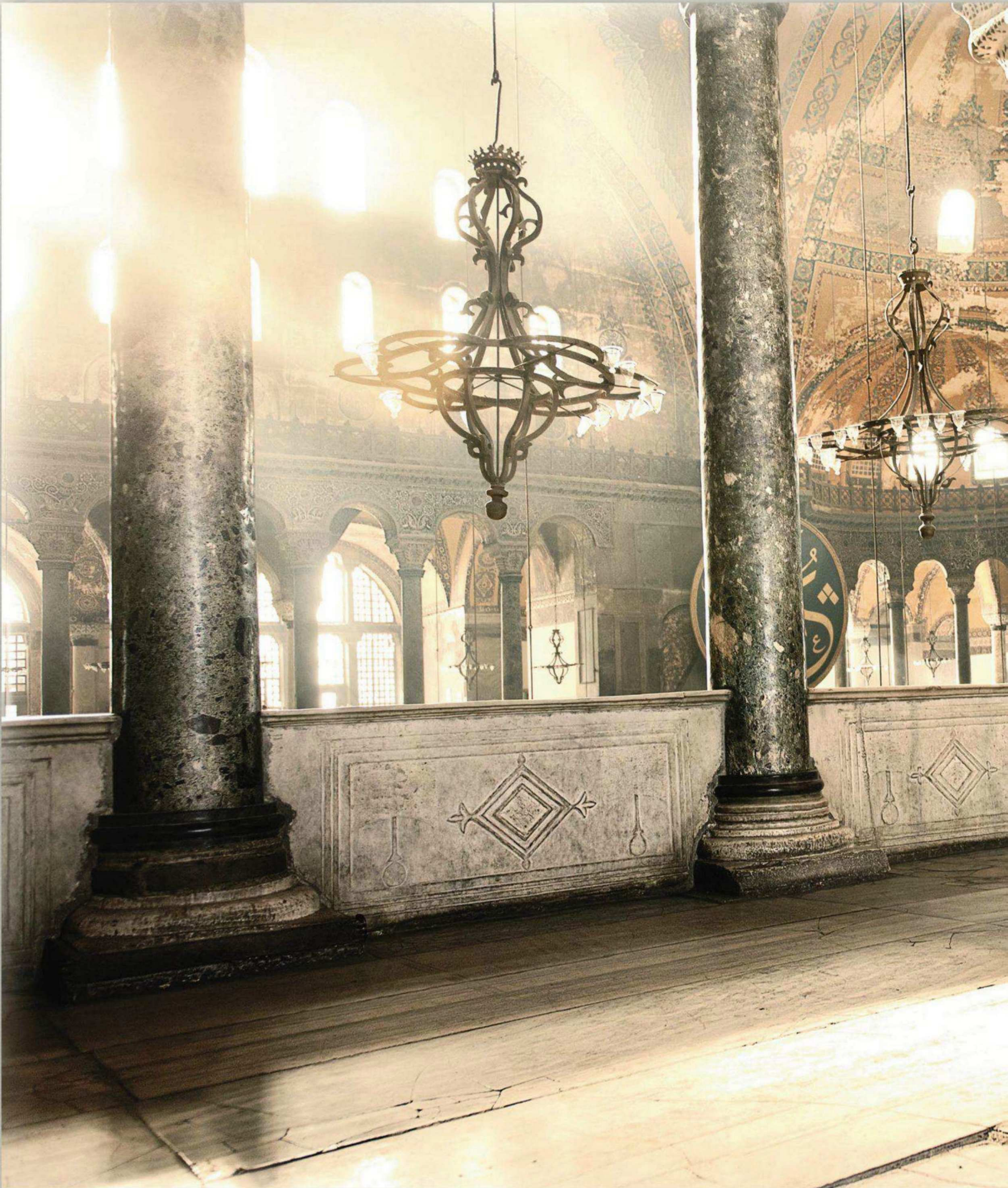


On the Cover:

The spired roof of Milan's Duomo is a popular vantage point for city views. Story on page 62. Photograph by Dave Yoder.



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Istanbul, Turkey

SOMETIMES
ONE PICTURE CAN BE WORTH
A THOUSAND
TEXTBOOKS.

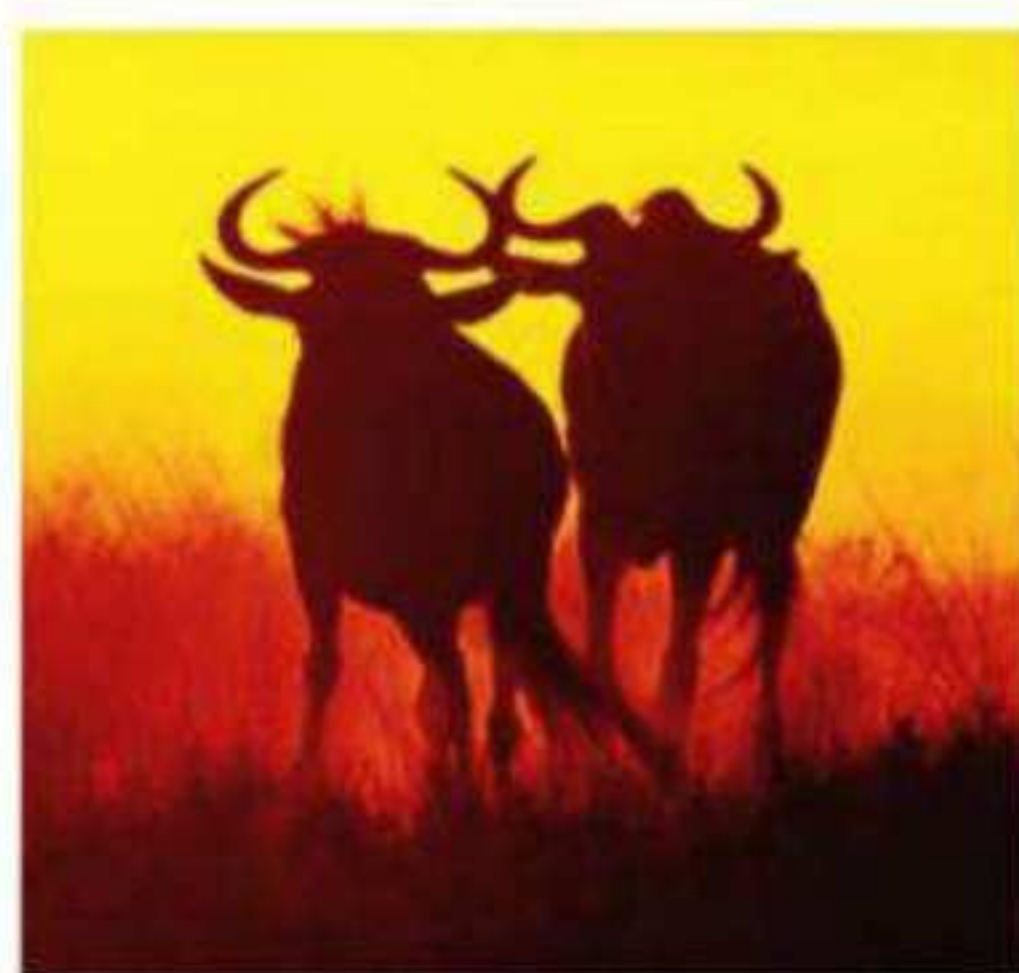
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Contents | COLUMNS AND DEPARTMENTS



THE COLUMNS

- 14 REAL TRAVEL** Daisann McLane craves the sound of silence on the road but comes to appreciate the art of noise.
- 16 UNBOUND** America's favorite national park isn't in a western wilderness but a major city—and it needs our help.
- 18 TALES FROM THE FRONTIER** A planned roadway through the Serengeti imperils the great wildebeest migration (*left*).
- 20 ONE ON ONE** Editor Keith Bellows chats with innovator Ken Banks about the power of mobile technology in Africa.
- 24 THE INSIDER** Bargain hunting for airline tickets just got harder. Christopher Elliott adds up the charges.

SMART TRAVELER SPECIAL

Pleasures of an American Summer

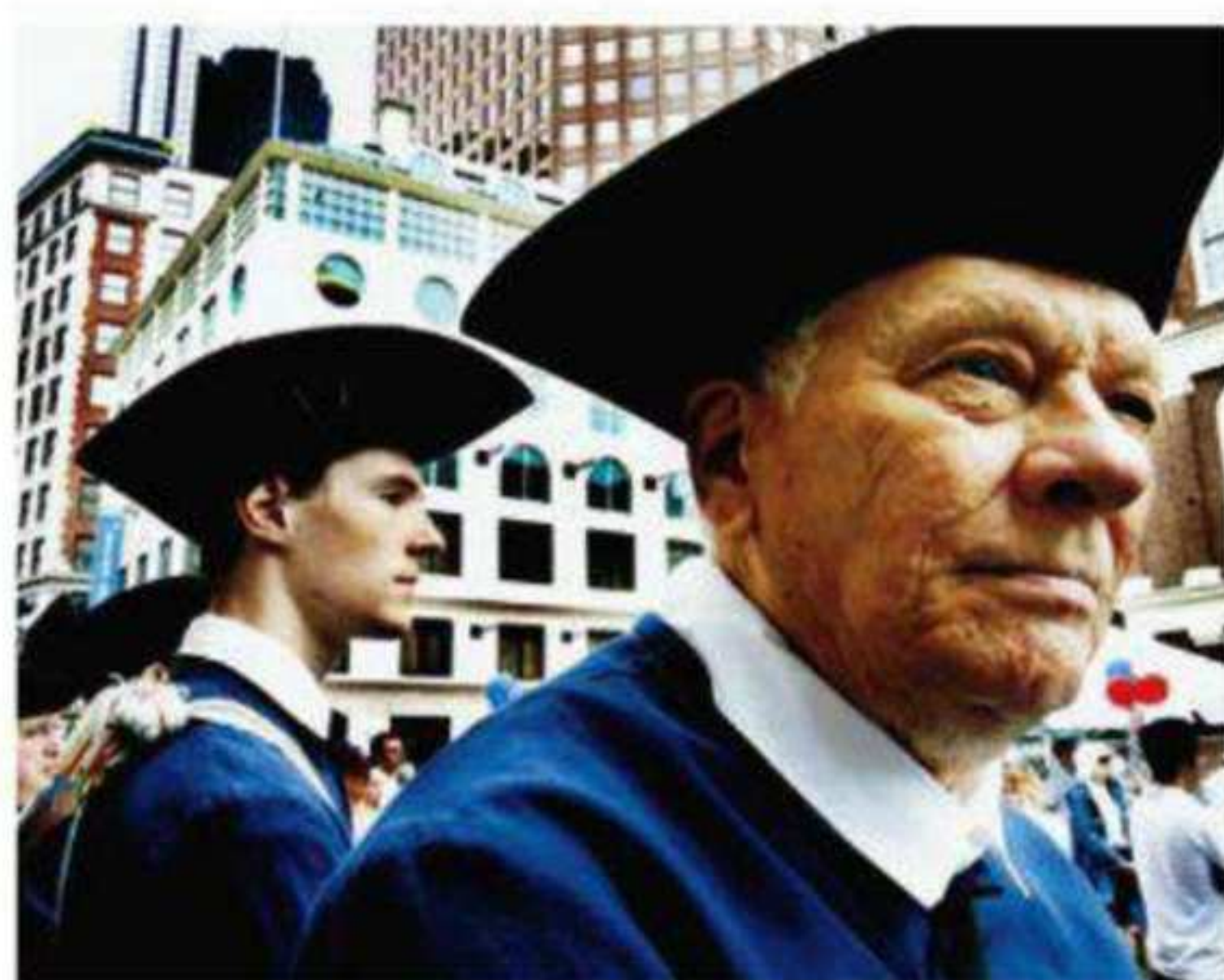
FROM CALIFORNIA TO THE NEW YORK ISLAND



A lakeside **Michigan** road trip...
Avoiding crowds at **Yellowstone**... Sun and sand at Florida's **South Walton beaches**... Classic 4th of July parades... State fairs to remember... Best roadside attractions to stop for... Great state desserts... Local-flavored ice-cream shops... Port of call: **Kauai**... 48 hours: **Philadelphia**... Pilgrimage to **Graceland**... Off-season ski resorts... **Sonoma** with kids... Family-friendly minor league baseball parks... Top river tubing spots.

Stories begin on page

28



DEPARTMENTS

What's Happening? Check out our Traveler 20 calendar of cool events including Siena's Palio, the Finger Lakes Wine Festival, Australia's Camel Cup, and Boston Harborfest (*left*). Page 94

10 Editor's Note

10 Backstory

Milan photographer Dave Yoder.

12 Inbox

104 Your Shot/Travel

A floating kebab stand in Frankfurt.

ANYWHERE ELSE
THIS WOULD JUST BE A LAKE.



BUT THIS IS THE SEA OF GALILEE

From its shores, Jesus of Nazareth delivered the Sermon on the Mount. It is one of the wonders of Israel, where all the stories of the Bible come alive, and where the history that makes us who we are still lives.



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Behind the Scenes



Cool Canadian park: A snorkeler explores Georgian Bay in Ontario's Bruce Peninsula National Park.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Preserving Paradise

ON PAGE 85 you'll find the feature "Star Trek: Yosemite to the Moon," which suggests that a prime time to navigate a national park is at night. As we closed this issue, another parks project landed on my desk—the galleys of a new National Geographic book celebrating the 100th birthday of Canada's national parks system. While leafing through its pages, I got nostalgic because I began my journalism career in Montreal researching a book on Canada's parks for Reader's Digest in 1974. I had just graduated with a minor in environmental studies, and concerns about conservation and sustainability were beginning to grab popular attention. Just where that led is evident in the book: Here are parks I had never heard of and that weren't around in 1974. No fewer than 14 parks have been created since 1974, a 33 percent increase. Similarly, in that period, the U.S. expanded its park system 36

percent, adding 21 parks. Let's hope this preservation binge doesn't peter out.

...

CHECK out *Traveler's* new "50 Places of a Lifetime" iPad app (left), now available in the iTunes store. "50 Places" reflects the input of our globe-spanning group of writers, photographers, explorers, and editors. And it takes you on an immersive, multimedia journey to the world's greatest destinations through rich photo galleries, 360-degree panoramas, videos, other interactive features, and short essays by world-renowned writers. You can even create your own personal destination checklist.

...

IN JULY our Digital Nomad embarks on the next leg of his global wanderings. With South America, Antarctica, and Australia under his belt, Andrew Evans heads for Ontario, Canada. Follow his adventures at digitalnomad.nationalgeographic.com.

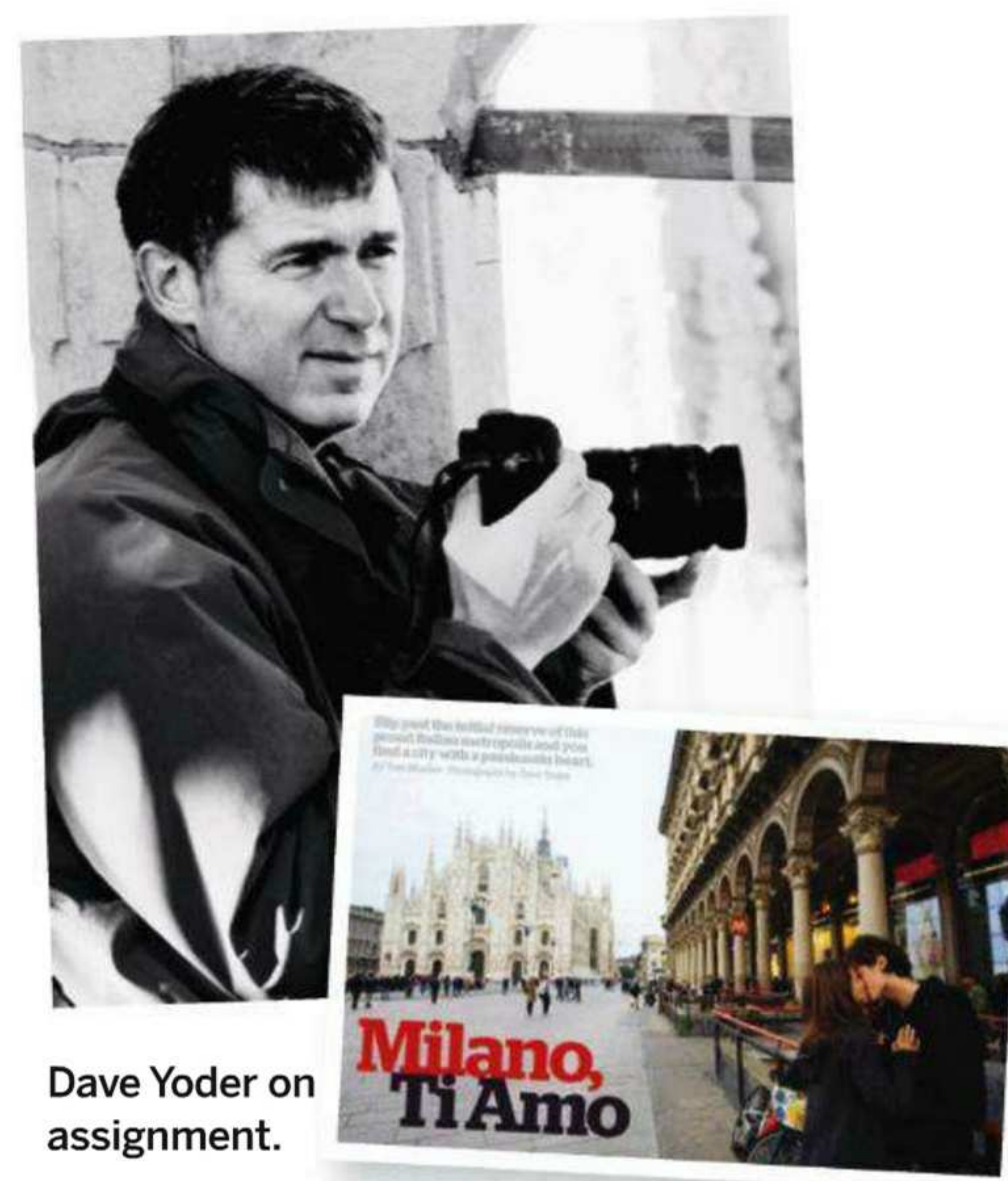
—Keith Bellows, Editor



BACKSTORY On the Other Side of the Camera

SHOOTING our feature on Milan (page 62), photographer Dave Yoder became the unlikely star of a segment of the National Geographic Television series *Nat Geo's Most Amazing Photos*, which features National Geographic photographers on assignment. "I've never been approached to do something like this before, and I was surprised at myself when I agreed," says Yoder. "I'm still surprised."

NGT producer Yvonne Russo and her team shadowed Yoder around Milan, where he is based, capturing almost every moment of his work day—from the mundane (making phone calls to arrange meetings) to the serendipitous (coming across a pampered terrier wearing a fur-lined dog coat—an only-in-Milan



Dave Yoder on assignment.

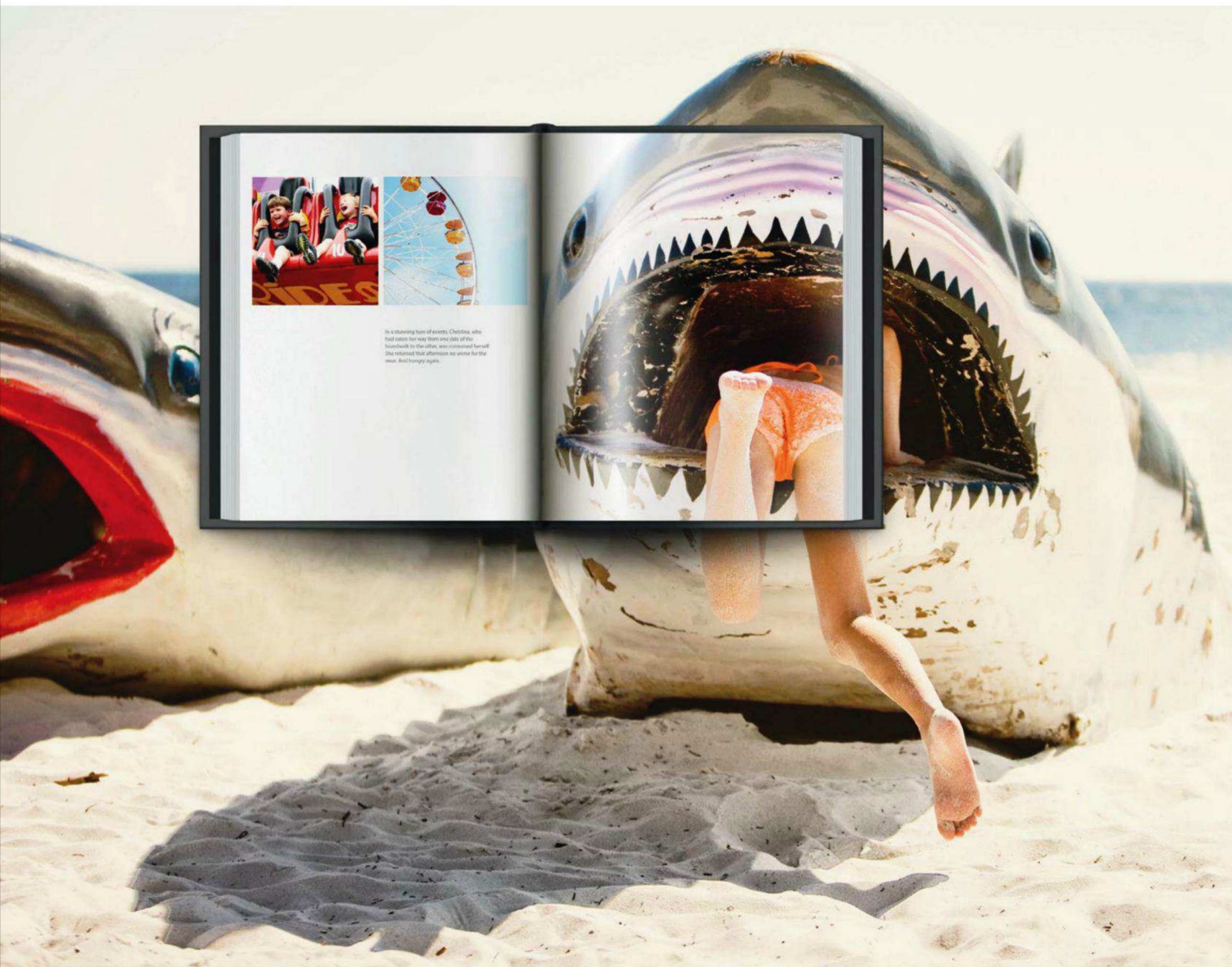
photo that appears in our story). "Being followed wasn't nearly as problematic as I had expected. They were like chameleons, vanishing whenever my camera needed to swing around in their direction."

The show will air on National Geographic Channel International this summer. Will Yoder be watching it? "Getting over being filmed is one thing, but having to watch it is another issue altogether."

—Amy Alipio, Associate Editor

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Civil War Memories

I WAS EXTREMELY interested in the article ‘Back to the Battlefields’ by Andrew Nelson [Smart Traveler, April 2011],” writes Ruth Angeli of St. Petersburg, Florida. With her letter, the 88-year-old Angeli included a diary excerpt written by her great-grandmother, Elizabeth Thorn, that recounted her firsthand experience at the battle of Gettysburg. The diary details how the then-pregnant Thorn, wife of the superintendent of Gettysburg’s Evergreen Cemetery, was tasked with burying 91 soldiers killed in the battle,



Not-so-ordinary courage: Elizabeth Thorn is honored in bronze at Gettysburg.

because her husband was away serving in the Union army. “There is now a seven-foot bronze statue of my great-grandmother in the Evergreen Cemetery (the citizens’ cemetery). A committee voted her the most likely to represent the women who supported the soldiers during that battle. I’d like to remind your readers that ordinary people—not just famous generals—did so much during the war.”

What’s that Smell?

“Daisann was right on the money with her April Real Travel column [‘Want Memories? Follow Your Nose’],” writes **Don Goodrich** of Bethel, Connecticut. “When I taught

writing, my students and I had fun discussing memories triggered by smells. Years after a journey, it is always a subtle aroma that brings me back to a destination like no picture ever could. Thank you, Daisann—you truly ‘see’ the power of the nose.”

Sunny Sevilla of Manila, Philippines, notes: “When I was growing up, American groceries were a rare luxury, usually bought from shopping centers near the old U.S. military base in Pampanga. Those stores—selling cereal, candy, laundry detergent, diapers—had a distinct smell. On my first trip to a supermarket in the U.S., I recognized the smell instantly. I also recognize that

DULY NOTED

“In your lament about the lack of mass-transit connections to airports [Insider, April 2011], you omitted one bright spot, Chicago, which has trains running to both Midway and O’Hare.”

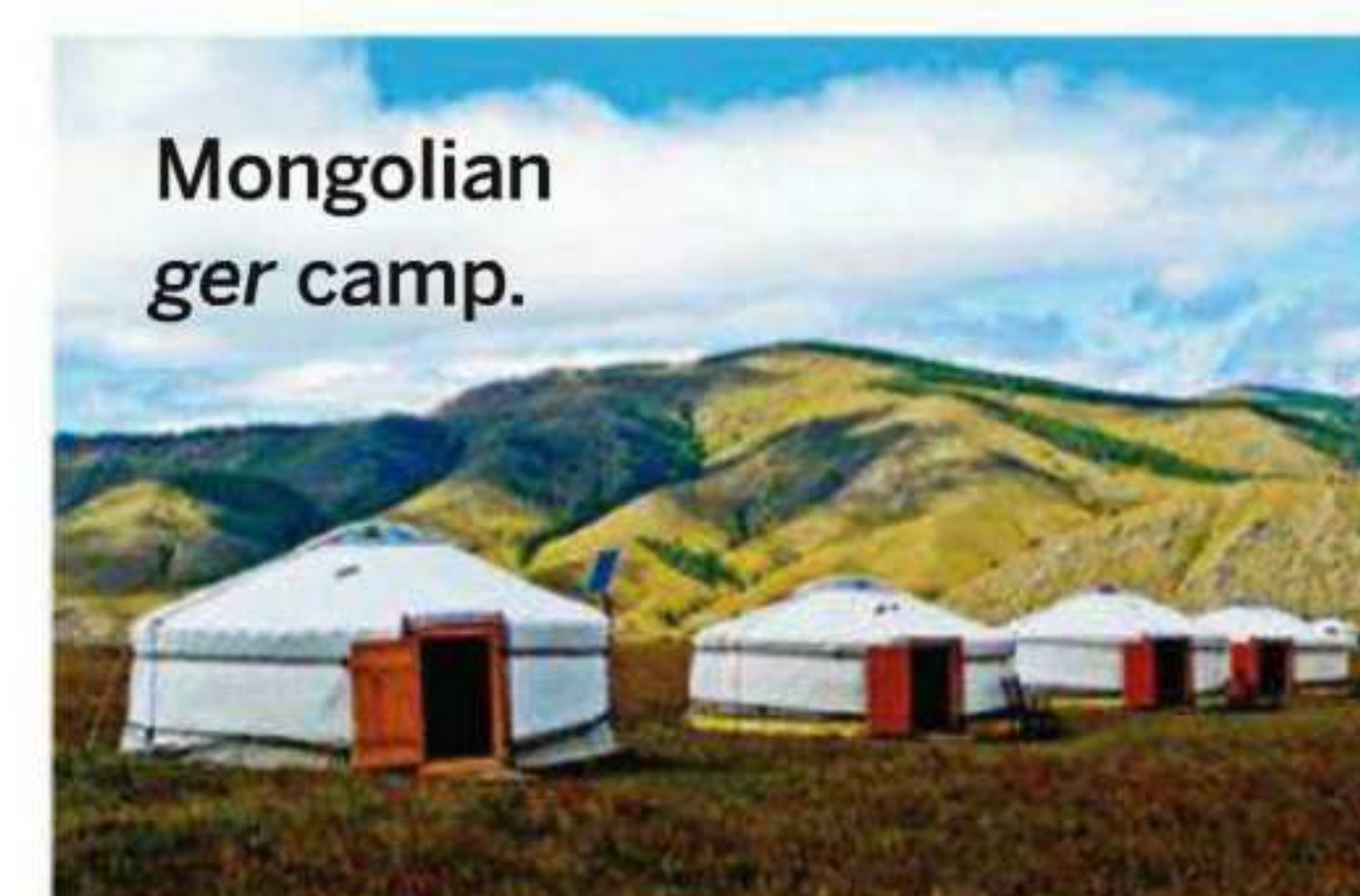
—Alfredo Lanier, San Miguel de Allende, Mexico

smell the moment relatives visiting from the U.S. open their suitcases. In Daisann’s article, she describes it as the ‘come in and buy’ scent. I call it *amoy America*—the smell of America—and it still brings good memories.”

Mongolian Connection

“Thank you for your excellent ‘Epic Mongol Battle’ by Costas Christ [Tales from the Frontier, April 2011],” writes **Susan Fox** of McKinleyville, California. “I’ve been to Mongolia five times now and it has become a second home for me. Giving the land there a value beyond resource extraction is so important. I support a women’s craft collective at Ikh Nartiin Chuluu Nature Reserve in Dornogobi Aimag. Illegal gemstone mining there has left long trenches. Nomadic Journeys runs a seasonal eco-ger (yurt) camp that brings customers to the collective. Participants get to work with the local herder women and learn about the culture. There is still time to help the Mongols preserve their land while getting the economic development they need.”

Jack Weatherford—who divides his time between Charleston, South Carolina,



and Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia—writes, “I am glad that you are giving Mongolian tour outfitter Jalsa Urubshurow some well-deserved attention. He is well known and greatly respected in Mongolia not only for reinventing tourism there and providing jobs in needed areas, but for his contribution to preserving the unique nature of this beautiful country.”

Correction

Peter Melnyk of Gig Harbor, Washington, noticed a mistake in “Crossing the Bridge” (Smart Traveler, April 2011). While our article stated that the New River Gorge Bridge in West Virginia is the highest vehicle-carrying bridge in the U.S., at 876 feet, Melnyk pointed out that the O’Callaghan-Tillman Memorial Bridge, connecting Nevada and Arizona, is nearly 900 feet. Looking into this error, we discovered that Colorado’s Royal Gorge Bridge is even higher, at 956 feet.

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Travel's Frenemy: Noise

The honking din of traffic, the lilt of an Andean flute: Sounds can break—or make—a vacation.

PASSPORT, BOARDING PASS, CELL PHONE..." As my taxi zips down Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn, destination JFK airport, I'm performing my anxious ritual: the pre-trip inventory. ¶ Yes, I've made this airport trip hundreds of times. No, I haven't ever left my passport behind on the counter. Still, I put myself through the back-seat drill every time because it's how I cope with tearing myself away from home. Phone number of hotel? Yup. Power adapters? Extra pair of eyeglasses? Got 'em right here. ¶ Then, suddenly,

a cord of panic pulls tight around my chest. I thrust my hand into one compartment of my handbag, then another, frantically fishing for the reassuring plastic bag filled with squishy lumps. It's not anywhere. My mouth opens, and the words, "Driver, turn around! Now!" almost spring out. But I swallow them. We're halfway to the airport, and I'm already running late. Surely I can survive one trip without my supply of foam earplugs?

I'm a generally invulnerable traveler except for one thing that undoes me every time: noise. Ask me about my absolute worst

travel experiences, and you won't hear a peep about flight delays or bumpy bus rides. Instead, I'll tell you the story about that night I missed the connecting flight in Tonga and the airline put me up in a cheap hotel room in the town of Tongatapu. Grayish sheets, moldy smells—I could deal with that. But at 10 p.m. my room suddenly began throbbing with powerful, low-frequency rumbles that shook the walls. I jumped out of bed, flew out the door, and rushed down the stairs, thinking, "Earthquake!"

Not quite. There was a lot of shaking going on, but the event was



Pump up the volume: A sound truck energizes carnival-goers in Trinidad.

GERNOT HUBER/LAIF/REDUX

purely man-made: That particular cheap hotel doubles as Tongatapu's most popular Saturday night disco.

Then there were the roosters that always began crowing at 2 a.m. at the rural retreat in Bali (no one, I guess, informed them that they shouldn't get going until dawn). And there were the deeply discounted hotel quarters with "swimming pool view" that I was so pleased with myself for snagging in Mexico. The swimming pool, it turned out, was under renovation. Actively. With jackhammers. Directly below my window. I didn't know whether to feel furious or cry, so I did a little of both.

Many years before I wrote about travel I was a pop-music critic (and musician). For a living I listened, intently, to sounds, which I think made me extra sensitive to them. I am the only one among my writer friends who works without music playing in the background; when the sound of my own words are playing in my mind, I just can't bear the distraction of anything else.

In my ideal travelers' world I'd control the volume of everything, like a music producer at a giant mixing board. There would be no blasting television sets hanging above public squares or embedded in taxi seats, no cheesy new-age songs playing while I had a massage. Loud, obtrusive, offensive, or extraneous whines, whirrs, honks, bleats, or bellows would be completely absent. Everywhere.

But no traveler can remain in a perfectly controlled sonic bubble. Not when we're moving through a world in which what constitutes noise has so many different interpretations, including whether noise is ever a bad thing. For sound is relative: One

person's noise is another person's music, or prayer, or expression of happiness.

On one of the first extended trips I ever took, I traveled to the Caribbean island of Trinidad for Carnival, which is basically like deciding to pitch your tent inside a dance hall for three weeks. At any hour, the *ram-ba-lam-bam* of a wayward sound-system bass speaker or the *tin-tin-tinna-tin* of a wooden mallet teasing a melody on a steel drum would float through the air and, without warning, straight into my ear. Neighbors shouted to each other over the din, then turned up the volume on their radios. It was a nonstop tumult of celebration, during which I got very little sleep. It was fabulous.

As was the modest backpackers hostel next to a mosque in Chennai, India, where, five times a day, starting at 4:30 a.m., a recording of the Muslim call to prayer, *Allllahhhuuakkkbar!!!*, blasted out from cheap metallic loudspeakers. The prayers woke me, then seeped into my dreams as, soothed, I fell back to sleep.

The thing is, the noise that wraps a city in Carnival happiness or leads a neighborhood through its daily rhythm of prayer is more than just noise: It's the sound of a human community. To block it out is to risk missing something really fundamental about a place—and the reassuring feeling of being part of something larger than yourself. Noise brings people together. I've learned this over and over in my travels, but it hasn't been an easy lesson to accept.

At a Chinese dinner in Hong Kong, for instance, where restaurants are filled with big, chatty, boisterous families, it drives me crazy that you can never have a proper

conversation. But when you ask a local person if a particular restaurant is good, almost always they will answer with, "Yes. It's tasty, and bustling, and noisy." The decibel level is as important as the cuisine. Just as there is comfort food, there is also comfort noise.

I struggle against my instinct to isolate myself in a cocoon of silence. I really don't want to cut myself off from the thrill of human cacophony. But I don't want to go crazy, either. Nowadays, unwanted—and largely non-human—sounds push and shove travelers from all directions. Cars, subways, construction, jet engines: Their clamor seems omnipresent. Yet instead of lowering the volume of everyday living, we seem to layer noise upon noise. The hotel bar jacks up its techno music to counteract the babble in the lobby. The traveler walking along traffic-choked streets retreats into her iPod.

On the plane at JFK airport, I squish my high-density foam earplug into a cylinder, then press it deep into my ear. As the foam slowly expands to fill my ear canal, I savor the journey into the bliss of noiselessness. Thank goodness the convenience store at JFK stocks one of travel's most essential items. The headache-inducing whine of the jet engines magically fades away, and I'm once again the master of my private sonic world.

To appreciate the comfort of noise, you also need the comfort of silence. I'll unplug when I get to where I'm going. ■

Contributing editor DAISANN McLANE sheds light on local ways in her blog, www.therealtravelblog.com.



Our Favorite National Park

Not Yellowstone, not the Grand Canyon, it's the National Mall, and it needs help.

MOST PEOPLE CAN'T WALK to a national park ten blocks from the office, but I'm doing it now. Surprisingly, when I cross the final avenue, busy with six lanes of traffic, and stand beneath the American elms at the edge of over 700 acres of parkland, I'm still inside a major city: Washington, D.C. I've come to the National Mall and Memorial Parks for the usual walk-in-the-park reasons: to exercise, savor nature, escape the stress of deadlines, and find a place of solitude for reflection and meditation.

I suspect the average American doesn't think of the heart of the U.S. capital as a national park and certainly not one with such soothing attributes. Given the contentious political debates that happen in D.C., the city itself seems the antithesis of what a park should be.

As a resident, I regularly drive by the Mall, but I often regard it as a tourist attraction to be visited only with out-of-town guests. Today, however, needing a quick nature fix, I've grabbed my camera and headed to the verdant expanse that rightly should be seen as the face of America.

I expect my walk to take two hours; it takes five. I begin at Constitution Gardens, which honors the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Continuing east, paralleling Constitution Avenue, I pass between the White House to the north and the Washington Monument to the south. Then I turn right toward the National Mall itself in the center of the park. Heading east, straight for the U.S. Capitol building, I look across the grass at our national museums on either side: American History, Natural History, Air and Space, the National Gallery of Art, and Smithsonian Castle (among others), each of which could keep



Mall of America: A jogger faces the sunrise from the Lincoln Memorial.

DANIEL WESTERGREEN

a visitor happily engaged for hours. The museums are part of the park, but today's hike is about fresh air and the big picture, so I stay outdoors.

By now I'm almost in hearing distance of the partisan insults echoing off the walls of the Capitol. I decide the Capitol Reflecting Pool, where Ulysses S. Grant sits astride his horse, is close enough for my tastes to the political rancor going on inside the famous domed building. Flanking Grant are statues of Civil War soldiers, a reminder of another period in history when Americans lost sight of the big picture and tried to go their separate ways.

Turning around, I walk back west past the Washington Monument to tour the National World War II Memorial and then on to the Korean War Veterans Memorial. Next I cut across to the black granite slash in the earth that is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. I can't help but ask myself: Don't we enter all these wars saying, "This will be the last?" If a walk in a park is supposed to make you reflective, then this one more than qualifies.

At the National Mall, we've taken our finest specimens of marble, limestone, and granite and cut, shaped, polished, and stacked them into impressive geometric formations. The Washington Monument, an obelisk, is the tallest masonry structure in the world. Mother Nature has also lent her hand. Almost 90 years of rain dripping through the marble of the Lincoln Memorial, finished in 1922, has formed dozens of small stalactites in the basement. During a special tour, I find a huge room with dirt floor, stone walls, and all those stalactites dangling from the ceiling. I feel as if I'm in

a stalactite nursery, where limestone formations are grown until big enough to be shipped off to a real cave.

Back above ground, I climb the steps of the Lincoln Memorial to the spot where Martin Luther King, Jr., gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. Inside, I read words from Lincoln's Gettysburg address carved into a wall: "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

One of those fathers was Thomas Jefferson. His neoclassic memorial sits on the Tidal Basin southeast of Lincoln. My route there will take me past the Mall's famous Japanese cherry trees.

But first I check out the site of the new Martin Luther King, Jr., National Memorial scheduled to open on the anniversary of his "Dream" speech this August 28. The path along the Tidal Basin leads me through the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, dedicated in 1997. More than any other memorial, it looks to me so American, incorporating wide-open spaces, giant granite blocks, waterfalls, and statues of ordinary people. Chiseled into the stonework are the words of a president who carried the country through a depression and a world war, reminding us yet again that we are all in it together: "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little."

By the time I reach the Jefferson Memorial, I also reach some conclusions about the park. First, if you want solitude, it's

not happening here. This national park is America's favorite, drawing some 25 million visitors a year—more than Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, and Yellowstone combined. Secondly, if this park is the face of the nation, we need a facelift. The memorials are still magnificent, but the park grounds are looking shabby.

Susan Spain, project executive for the National Mall Plan, agrees to rewalk the Mall with me to point out some of its needs. "Eight, nine, ten, 11 buses parked near the Washington Monument," she counts. "Imagine kids getting off all of them at the same time and racing to get to a restroom. It's a disaster." Why? "There are only 12 permanent toilets or urinals around the monument, then not another restroom facility [besides those inside the museums] on the Mall between the monument and the Capitol." She talks about widening walkways, planting grass, and installing irrigation systems.

The cost? Spain says current estimates range from \$606 million to \$648 million, including taking care of deferred maintenance and making needed improvements.

The National Mall reflects our most cherished values with monuments honoring those who fought to preserve them. The memorials mesh with the fabric of activity here, as folks play ball, ride bikes, jog, picnic, gather for national celebrations, and attend rallies. Can we afford to maintain the Mall, this symbol of quintessential America? Perhaps the question should be: Can we afford not to? ■

Contributing editor BOYD MATSON hosts *National Geographic Weekend* on radio.



HIKING BOOT

Last Stand in the Serengeti

A planned highway imperils the greatest show on Earth.

IT CAN BE SURPRISINGLY difficult to find a herd of more than a million wildebeest roaming across the Serengeti, but sometimes the herd finds you. After searching these vast plains in vain for two days, I pull my Land Rover into a park campsite, pitch a tent, and lie down, exhausted, only to be awakened after midnight by what I think is a light earthquake. It isn't. Under a half-moon sky, the pounding of hooves and frog-like croaking of wildebeest envelope me. I poke my head out of the tent and watch in wonder. By sunrise, the horde

has fanned out as far as I can see—black dots scattered to the horizon. Nothing could have prepared me for this sight: one of the last great land migrations on Earth.

It all could come to a grunting, honking halt. Despite an outcry from conservation groups and scientists worldwide, the Tanzanian government plans to build a commercial highway that will link the dusty safari capital of Arusha in the east to the lush shores of Lake Victoria in the west—cutting across the Serengeti. Thirty-three miles of road, slated for construction in 2012, will sever the northern section of the Serengeti National Park through which

the wildebeest march in a cyclical search for green pastures. The road, scientists predict, will lead to the eventual collapse of the wildebeest population from barriers to forage and water, increased poaching, and traffic collisions.

The roughly 9,700-square-mile Serengeti ecosystem straddles two countries and two parks—Tanzania's Serengeti and Kenya's Masai Mara. The parks protect not only the wildebeest but also some 300,000 gazelles and 200,000 zebras. The migration sustains such predators as lions, leopards, cheetahs, and hyenas, along with a host of smaller species from vultures to dung beetles. As



Paving paradise? Wildebeest on the move in Tanzania's Serengeti.

JONATHAN GALE/GETTY IMAGES

they have for millennia, all depend on the wildebeest returning year after year.

The Tanzanian government insists that the planned road will deliver much-needed economic development to an isolated region of the country. Some supporters note that the United States didn't hesitate to wipe out huge herds of buffalo from the Great Plains in the name of economic prosperity. They're right: Developed nations, including the U.S., plundered their natural resources and learned conservation lessons too late. They may bear a responsibility to help struggling nations preserve their natural heritage. Nowadays, no nation can excuse the continued plunder of the planet's remaining natural treasures.

"It's a mistake for conservationists or the Tanzanian government to make this a matter of wildebeest versus economic development. Rather, the wildebeest are part of the economic development of the region," says Richard Leakey, whose parents discovered some of the oldest human ancestors at Olduvai Gorge next to the Serengeti and who himself once served as director of the Kenya Wildlife Service, responsible for protecting the northern part of the migration. "The issue is whether this highway, as it is now planned, will kill the goose that lays the golden egg. I believe it will. But with a different design, the migration and the highway can both easily exist in a win-win solution."

One alternative is a longer highway route around the southern boundary of the park, far from the migration. Initially, Tanzanian officials argued this option was too costly. But when the World Bank offered last February to finance the alternative route,

Tanzania's government declined. The German government then offered to fund a feasibility study of the alternative route as well as to finance a road network adjacent to the park linking villages that the Tanzanian authorities have said need the highway for economic growth.

"We will do nothing to hurt the Serengeti," insists Tanzania's president, Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, who has yet to respond to Germany's offer. His seemingly intractable position has puzzled and frustrated those watching this drama unfold: Why would Tanzania, long known for its commitment to conservation, decide to build a highway across the world's most famous wildlife park, which last year was the largest contributor to the country's \$1.28 billion tourism industry?

"It will lead to strip development such as gas stations and shops and introduce motorized poaching, invasive plant species, and the spread of disease. It will also cause a reduction in tourist arrivals, with a significant loss of revenue to Tanzanians," says Mustafa Akunaay of the Tanzania Association of Tour Operators. Indeed, even the government's own study concluded that by the end of 2016, more than a million vehicles will have used the highway.

International tour operators are equally aghast. "The road poses a huge risk for the survival of the Serengeti as a World Heritage icon," says Ashish Sanghrajka, president of Florida-based Big Five Tours and Expeditions, which has operated in the Serengeti for nearly four decades. Big Five has joined other tour operators and travelers in supporting the efforts of Serengeti Watch (www.savetheserengeti.org), calling on Tanzanian authorities to abandon plans for the highway.

To make matters worse, President Kikwete recently announced that he will fast-track construction of a soda ash mining operation at Lake Natron, close to the planned highway. The move fuels the speculation that access to mining rights is behind the government's insistence on the road. Lake Natron is the only known breeding ground for East Africa's vulnerable lesser flamingos.

I've heard that astronauts seeing the Earth from space describe the experience as a humbling, profound sense of interconnectedness. I'll never make it to outer space, but I've had the same feeling. When I first witnessed the wildebeest migration 31 years ago, it changed my life. I stayed in East Africa for a decade, learned the local language, and lived among villagers who are today's stewards of the migration.

Efforts to save the Serengeti date back decades. In the 1950s, Bernhard Grzimek of the Frankfurt Zoological Society led a campaign to save the wildebeest migration. His seminal book and a subsequent movie of the same title, *Serengeti Shall Not Die*, asserted that conserving the Serengeti was a global imperative. The international outcry that followed helped win protected status for the same park corridor that will accommodate the new highway.

Come on, travelers. In an era of Facebook revolutions and transformation on a tweet, it's time for a new global outcry. ■

Editor at large COSTAS CHRIST writes about sustainability and tourism issues. E-mail your comments to Travel_Talk@ngs.org.

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Leapfrogging the Internet

Ken Banks uses cheap—but powerful—technology to change lives in the developing world.

TEN-DOLLAR CELL PHONES are easier to obtain than Internet access in many parts of the developing world. And now, thanks to software conceived by Ken Banks, a National Geographic Emerging Explorer, cheap phones are making the Internet unnecessary in those places. Grassroots groups are exchanging vital information from laptop to cell phone in areas the Internet doesn't reach. Banks's FrontlineSMS text messaging software, which he offers for free, is used in more than 70 countries. It has helped locals monitor elections in Africa, run a rural health-care network in India, and receive commodity pricing information in Cambodia and El Salvador. Since 2005, the software has been downloaded more than 14,000 times, helping hundreds of thousands of people in a variety of ways.

Tell us more about FrontlineSMS.

It's software you install on any computer. Then you connect the computer to a mobile phone using a cable. Finally, with even just one bar of mobile phone signal, you can send text messages to communities and groups in the most rural areas. It leapfrogs into places where digital communication didn't exist.

Where did the idea come from? In 2003 and 2004, I was working in South Africa's Kruger National Park, which was experiencing a communication challenge with surrounding communities. The locals felt disenfranchised, not benefitting from park revenues. The people already had cell phones, but the park didn't have a way to send everyone a message, to arrange meetings, to discuss ideas for the park. Group messaging systems required the Internet. One day in early 2005, I was watching football back home in Cambridge, England, when suddenly the idea came to build

KEN BANKS

MOBILE TECHNOLOGY INNOVATOR

Ken Banks has worked 18 years on projects in Africa. He developed FrontlineSMS, a messaging system for grassroots nonprofit organizations. Banks has a degree in social anthropology from Sussex University and was named a National Geographic Emerging Explorer last year.

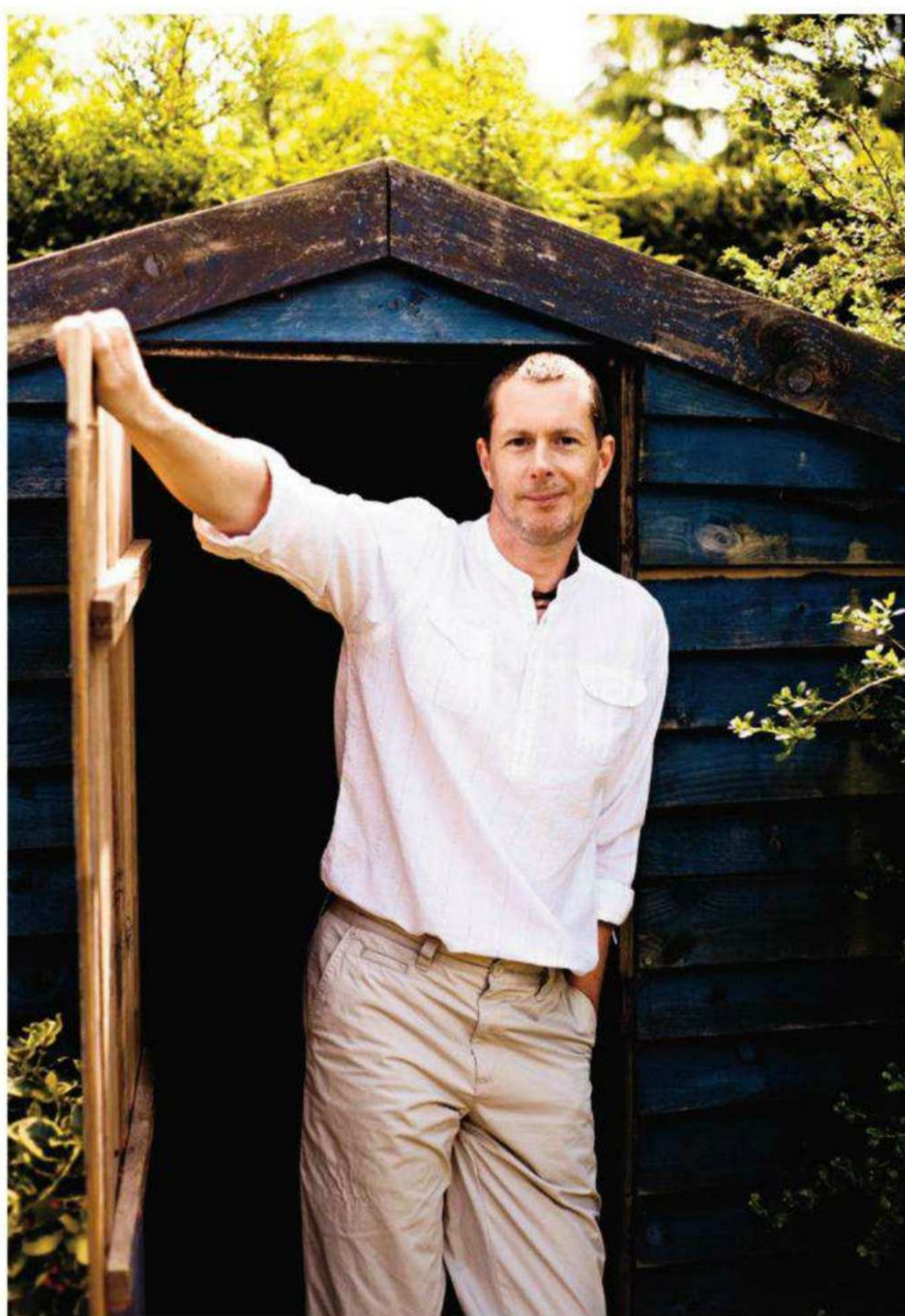
a system that works off the mobile phone network instead of the Internet. The cell phone network is growing so fast, you can get coverage in the most unexpected places. If I could make the system simple enough, then anyone could use it, and people would find their own ways of benefiting from it.

Have folks adapted it to their own uses? It's been very interesting to see people building new modules for specific sectors. Now we have FrontlineSMS: Medic. Using Medic, you can build a patient record-keeping system, so a hospital in rural Malawi can run an entire network of community health care, updating patient records via cell phone. It's revolutionary for those clinics. There's a module called Credit, which can help create a microfinance

system so that people can transfer money and make payments on their loans without having to travel for days to the bank to do it. The Legal module will provide access to legal advice for underprivileged populations. Another module called Learn will help groups offer distance learning to rural communities in developing countries. These are all new modules that people are independently building on top of the simple platform I created. That's exciting. I'm not creating the change; I'm empowering it. It's the users who figure out their own solutions rather than some white guy in the U.K. telling them what to do.

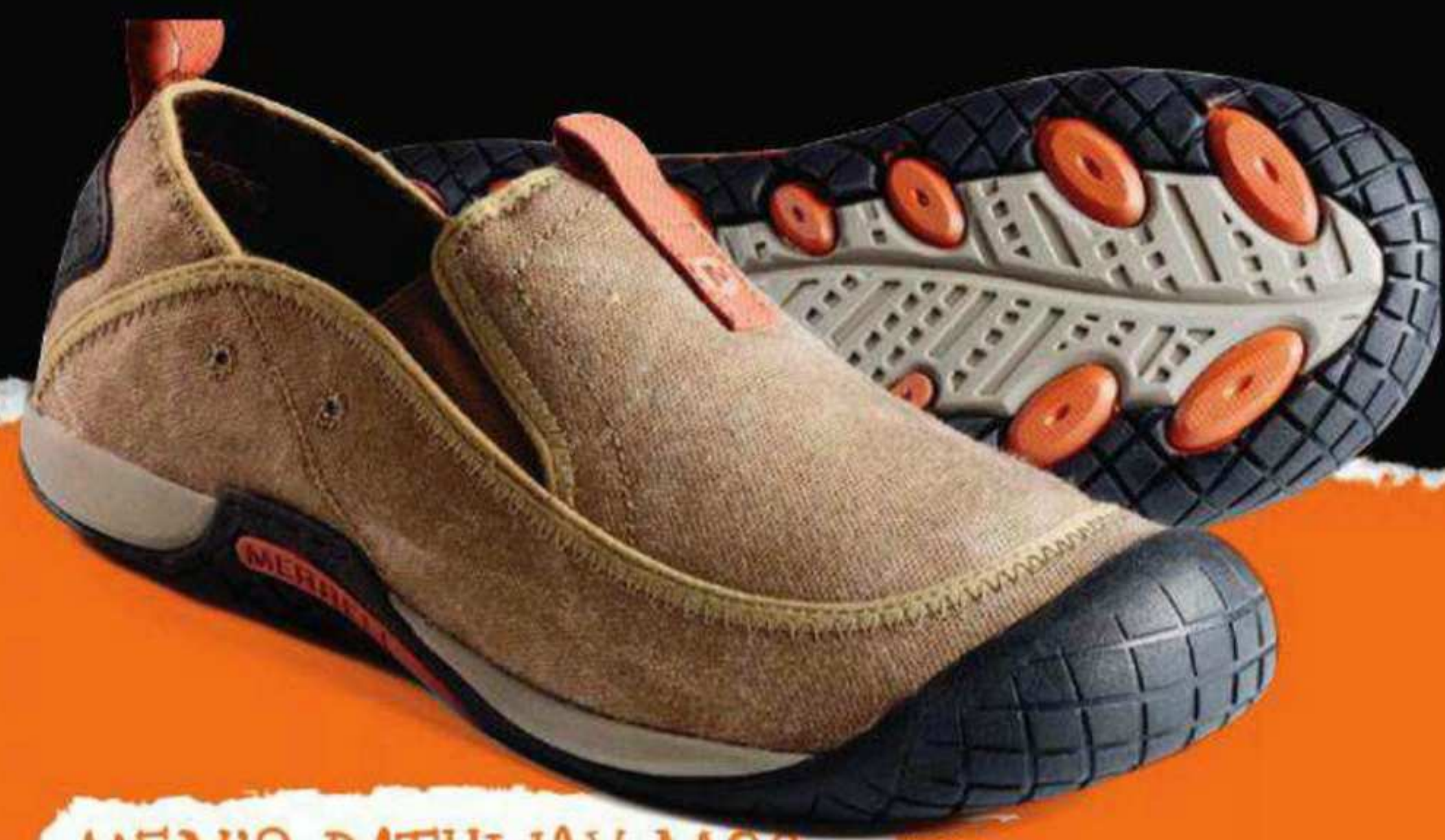
How does an anthropologist like you learn to create software? Well, my background was always in information technology. I taught myself to program at age 13 or 14 at a local club, using a Commodore PET computer. It was a club where most of the kids just played games, but I was curious how the games worked, so I'd break

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26



Down on the farm: Ken Banks brings high tech to rural communities.

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Bothered and Bewildered

New airline tactics and so-called innovations make comparing airfares more difficult.

IF YOU'RE LOOKING for a bargain airline ticket—and let's face it, who isn't?—then you've probably felt like banging your head against the computer screen lately. ¶ Some airlines have gone AWOL from popular travel booking sites. A recent search for a flight from Dallas to Miami on Orbitz.com pulled up fares on Delta, United, and US Airways. The cheapest flight, \$340 on Delta, required a stopover in Memphis. But what about the \$299 direct flight on American? Nowhere to be found. American isn't on Orbitz at all.

Want to get from Atlanta to Chicago? Bargain hunters often click on CheapOAir.com. The site displays fares from American, Continental, and United but not Delta. Too bad. When checked, Delta was beating its competitors by \$58 per round-trip.

Entire airlines have vanished from travel sites, often without warning. More could follow.

Worse, quoted airfares exclude many items that now cost extra. Want to check luggage on US Airways? Your first bag costs \$25. Several airlines charge for a confirmed seat assignment.

Spirit Airlines even makes passengers pay a \$45 surcharge at the gate to carry on their bags beyond one "personal item." Seriously. You almost have to be an accountant to figure out the true cost of flying.

When it comes to airfare shopping, we've fallen far and fast. As late as 2010, all major carriers except Southwest listed fares on the big online agencies. Two years before that, just about every domestic fare quote covered a reserved seat, the ability to check at least one bag, and in most cases, a snack or meal.

Since then, airlines have throttled comparison shopping. It's more difficult to figure out which carrier offers the lowest price, and even if you find a low fare, the add-ons can kill you. Consumers are confused, and airlines apparently like it that way: Confusion translates into earnings as travelers spend more than they expected to. With airline profits threatened by higher energy costs, the industry is relying on these extras to keep its losses in check.

"The way airline tickets are sold is evolving," says Michael Miller, a vice president at the American Aviation Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based aviation-policy think tank. The technology tweaks are bad for consumers but good for the industry. A recent IdeaWorks survey estimated the airline industry collected



Fee for all: Fees for luggage are often difficult to determine in advance.

The airline industry collected \$22.6 billion last year in what it calls ancillary revenue such as baggage fees.

surcharge on last-minute baggage fees; a checked bag now costs up to \$38, one way.

The latest airline industry obsession is energy. Granted, fuel prices have spiked in the wake of Middle East unrest, but several airlines are adding fuel surcharges that border on the absurd. A recent British Airways round-trip flight from San Francisco to London was priced at an excellent \$447 on its website—until you added fuel surcharges on the third booking screen. Then it cost \$982, which may not be a terrible fare but is certainly misleading. One discount airline, Allegiant, even wants to sell a type of ticket that goes up—or down—as fuel prices fluctuate.

Still, why would airlines remove themselves from booking sites that sell their products? At the heart of the complicated dispute between Orbitz and American is a new reservation technology called Direct Connect. Think of it as a way for the airline to sell its tickets directly to an online travel agency, bypassing the traditional computer reservations systems. Airlines claim this new technology is a win-win, cutting their costs and giving passengers more choices. I've investigated, and I'm doubtful it will help us in a meaningful way. In the meantime, consumers have to visit multiple websites to see all available fares.

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No one begrudges airlines' right to save money, or make it. But it shouldn't be done by withholding information consumers need to make choices. The big problem is that airlines generally don't disclose the fees until after you've fallen for a low fare and often long after you've booked the ticket. Trying to determine fees beforehand, unfortunately, is time consuming and frustrating.

For example, I queried Delta.com for a fare between Orlando, where I live, and Maui, and the site pulled up "total" round-trip fare of \$1,611. Although the system was sophisticated enough to let me know there was only one ticket left at that price, and could calculate all taxes and airport fees, it didn't offer the option to check a bag—just a small caveat that "there may be additional fees for checked bags." Only by clicking to another screen did I learn that my first checked bag would cost \$25 and the second bag another \$35. So taking two bags there and back would cost \$120. And since there are five of us, we're talking about \$600. No wonder Delta collected \$733 million in baggage fees during the first nine months of 2010. How many passengers mindlessly clicked past the little warning and were broadsided later?

The good news is that consumers have

some advocates on this issue besides me. A coalition of travel agencies and associations called Open Allies for Airfare Transparency is calling the airlines out. They say new computer reservations systems are making price comparisons more difficult and that airlines are duping their own customers by unbundling their fares. "Intentional obfuscation is in fact now part of the air travel landscape," says coalition director Andrew Weinstein. "Airlines must not be allowed to profit from confusion."

Both Congress and the Department of Transportation are considering rules that could help. In April, regulators announced they would require airlines to disclose all mandatory fees on their websites starting this summer but stopped short of requiring carriers to display an "all-inclusive" fare that incorporates optional surcharges. They promised to address the issue later. Here's hoping regulators recognize that these so-called technological advances aren't progress at all. Progress doesn't make people want to bang their heads against the computer. ■

Contributing editor CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT also addresses readers' travel problems. E-mail him your story at celliott@ngs.org.

ONE ON ONE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

into them and change the code. I studied IT when I was in school. I combined that technical knowledge with my experience traveling, which, since 1993, took place mostly in Africa. There, I helped in school and hospital construction, conservation projects, running a primate sanctuary, and training people on computers and the Internet. Using my anthropology degree, I studied how people interact with technology. Then I tried to build software tools that would smooth out the tensions that technological change can cause. My hope was to lower barriers to entry for technologies that can be transformative. It's about making software tools that work where people need them the most.

Speaking of transformative, how have your travels transformed you? The first time I went to Africa, I went to Zambia. There I met people who lacked access to very basic health care and were dying in great pain and farmers who worked all year to grow crops that would be wiped out in floods or drought. What really surprised me wasn't the culture shock of being in Zambia; it was the shock of coming home. It's com-

mon for people who travel to developing countries, seeing locals living in relatively grim conditions, to feel challenged about the way we live in the developed world. You suddenly see all the paved roads and electric lights and the waste and affluence that we have, and you realize all that's not really what makes a person happy. There's such inequality in the developing world that it just seemed ethically wrong for me to turn my back on what I'd seen and not try to do something to help.

Do you have a particular approach to travel?

What seems common in my travels is that, once I'm in a destination, I walk everywhere I can. For example, I spent a month in Kampala, Uganda, working with the Grameen Foundation, which focuses on microfinancing. I drew my own walking map of Kampala, showing neighborhood bookshops, local cafés, the various places you're told not to go where I met some amazing people. I gave the map to those who came in to replace me. And they loved it because they suddenly had this map that showed all the great places to get beans and rice for ten cents. ■

KEITH BELLOWS is the editor of *Traveler*.

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Fig. 1 Violet-Green Swallow



*Fig. 2
Evening Grosbeak*



Fig. 3 Spotted Owl



Fig. 4 Raven's Egg



Fig. 5 Steller's Jay



*Fig. 6
Western Meadowlark*



Fig. 7 Northern Flicker

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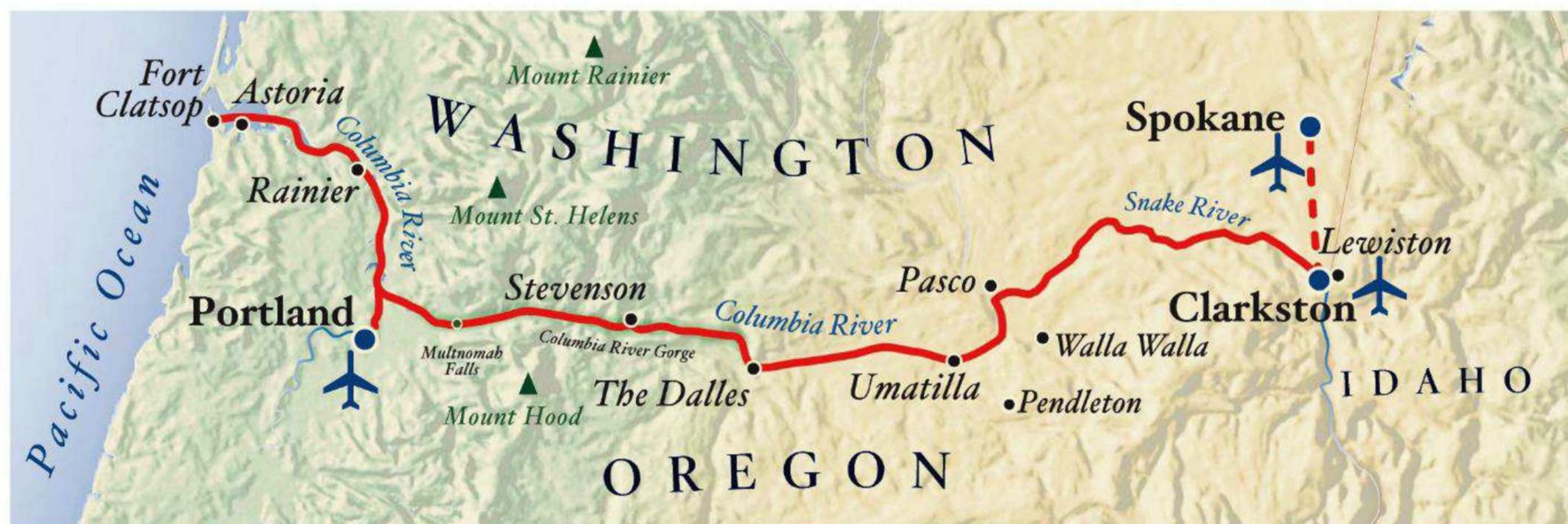
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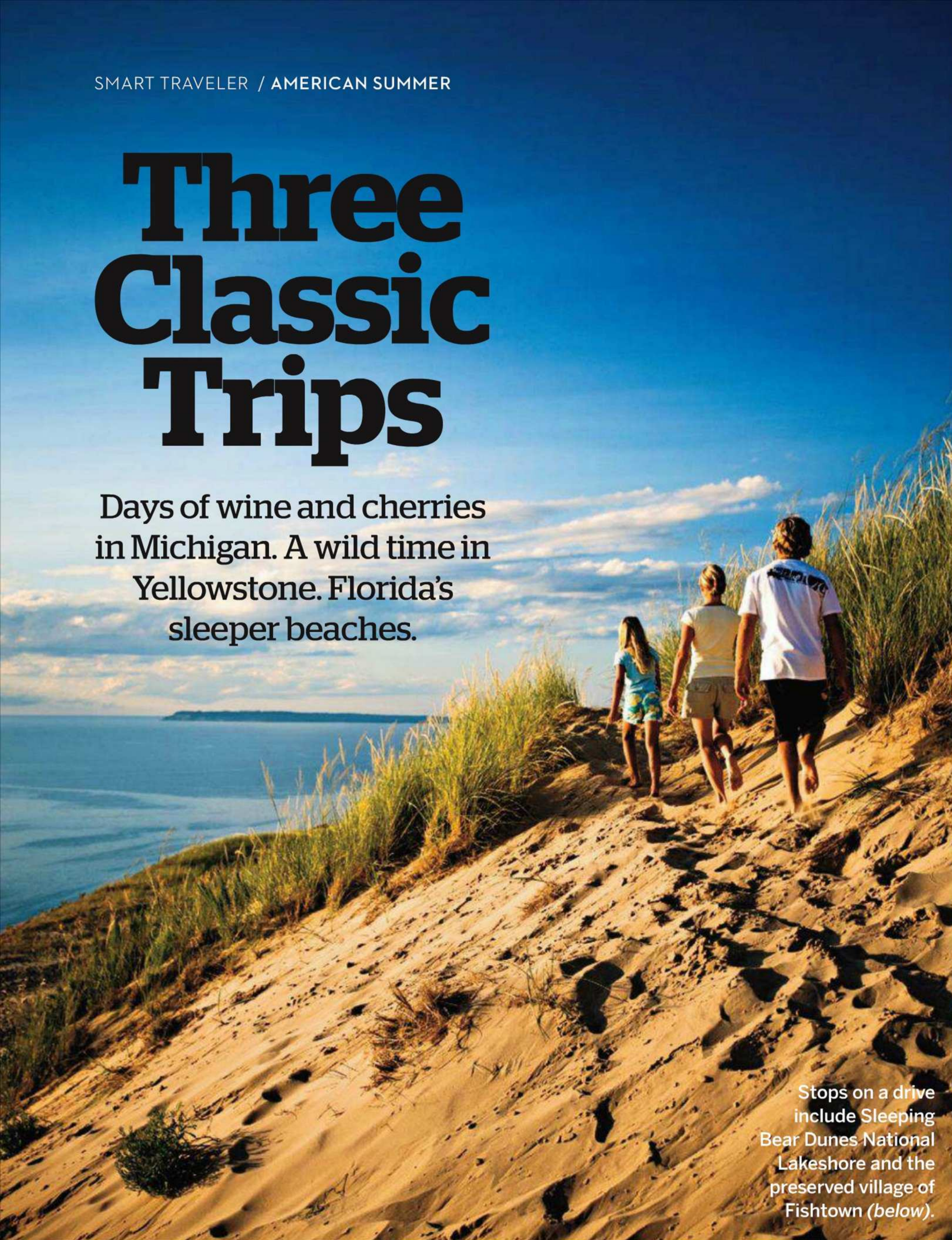
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Stops on a drive include Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore and the preserved village of Fishtown (below).

THE DRIVE | By LAURA MARTONE

Michigan: Cruisin' a Great Lake

BEYOND the auto factories, powerhouse universities, and bustling urban centers of southern Michigan lies an idyllic coastal region that often surprises newcomers to the Great Lakes State. "I was astonished to realize how beautiful the landscape is. There are towering bluffs made of sand, and the waters are breathtakingly clear and blue," says local writer Mike Norton, who grew up in Grand Rapids and spent his early adult years in coastal areas such as Monterey and Miami. "I hadn't expected to stay, but once I returned, I never left." The northwestern part of Michigan's mitten-shaped Lower Peninsula offers a small-town, pastoral escape. In an area

contoured by the waters of Lake Michigan, Grand Traverse Bay, Little Traverse Bay, and several inland lakes and rivers, road-trippers will find quiet harbors, historic lighthouses, award-winning wineries, and charming towns that reach their scenic peak during the mild summer months.

THE CHERRY CAPITAL

Traverse City is the gateway to this fertile region and self-proclaimed "cherry capital of the world." Surrounded by tart cherry orchards that bear fruit by midsummer, it is home to cherry-related shops, the Cherry Capital Airport, and, in early July, the National Cherry Festival, an eight-day event featuring races, parades, concerts,

and pit-spitting and pie-eating contests. "We grow 72 percent of the U.S.'s tart cherries in the Traverse City region," says Susan Wilcox Olson, the festival's media relations director. "Although the town turns red with cherries in July, we celebrate the health benefits of this superfruit all year round."

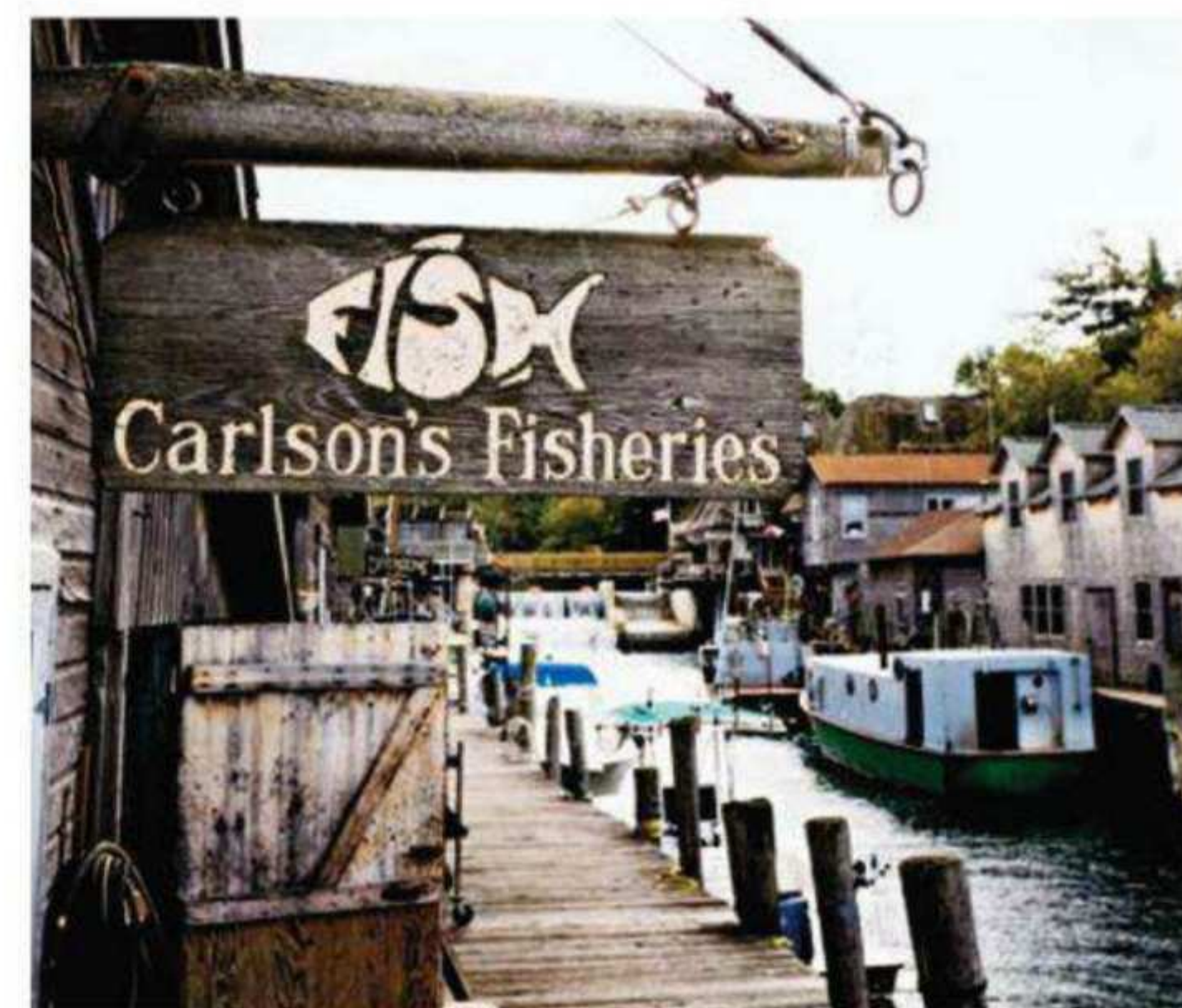
Galleries and emporiums fill Traverse City's manicured downtown area; stock up on everything from dried tart cherries to cherry-emblazoned sandals. There are flicks at the State Theatre and concerts at the Victorian-era City Opera House. Bicyclists pedal along the sailboat-dotted shore (rent bikes from Brick Wheels).

A short detour leads to the Old Mission Peninsula, which cleaves Grand Traverse Bay in half and plays a key role in the state's lucrative wine industry. Nurtured by lake-effect weather patterns, the seven wineries here include Peninsula Cellars, whose tasting room was a 19th-century schoolhouse, and Chateau Grand Traverse, which features bay views and several nationally recognized Rieslings. Try the cherry chicken salad at the weathered Old Mission Tavern, check out the lighthouse in Peninsula Township Park, and bed down at Chateau Chantal, a European-style B&B and winery.

COASTING THE PENINSULA

West of Traverse City lie the pebble-strewn beaches, hardwood forests, nostalgic farms, inland lakes, and famous rolling dunes (up to 400 feet high) of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. As long as you don't mind the sandy, windblown feeling, attempt the Dune Climb. Your reward: incomparable views of Glen Lake.

Continuing up the coast of the Leelanau Peninsula, head to the preserved fishing village of Fishtown in Leland and the 19th-century Grand Traverse Lighthouse. There are more wineries here, including Leelanau Cellars (try its Pinot Grigio and Rieslings), and the Ciccone Vineyard and Winery, owned by the father of pop icon Madonna



BRIAN CONFER (UPPER AND LOWER)



(request a sip of its Dolcetto and Cabernet Franc blend). Stay the night at Black Star Farms, an eight-room B&B producing artisanal wines and cheeses.

LINKS AND LAKES

The east coast of Grand Traverse Bay challenges golfers at the Grand Traverse Resort in Acme or the A-Ga-Ming Golf Resort overlooking Torch Lake near Kewadin. Nongolfers can skip the links and explore the five-mile-long stretch of beaches and dunes along Lake Michigan.

Perfectly situated between Lake Michigan and Lake Charlevoix, the town of Charlevoix is for lake lovers—the bustling harbor offers services for boating and fishing.

Charlevoix has its own homegrown architecture, characterized by curving roofs, whimsical chimneys, and stone hearths. Designed by native son Earl Young, the structures resemble the domiciles of elves, gnomes, and hobbits. Book a room at the



Roadside scenery: Stops along the drive include stately lakefront homes (above) and farm stands offering fruit and homemade pies (right).

Weathervane Terrace Inn and enjoy waterfront dining at Stafford's Weathervane Restaurant—both designed by Young.

HEMINGWAY'S HAVEN

Another, perhaps more notable character to emerge from this corner of the Great Lakes is Ernest Hemingway, who spent childhood summers on nearby Walloon Lake. The museum in Petoskey, a town on Little Traverse Bay, features an exhibit about its adopted son. True fans might relish a side trip to the 19th-century Horton Bay General Store, once frequented by the young man. Relax on the inviting porch or enjoy root beer floats and other treats at the old-fashioned soda fountain.

The region continued to inspire and



shape Hemingway's fiction, even after he moved to Paris. Spend your last night at Stafford's Bay View Inn, opened in 1886, or Stafford's Perry Hotel, the canary-yellow resort where the celebrated American writer once stayed. Though Michigan may lack Paris's panache, it surely has a natural American beauty Hemingway could never have forgotten. ■

THE PARK | By JOHN ROSENTHAL

American Idol: Yellowstone National Park

EVERYONE LOVES a good eruption, especially one you can practically set your watch by. At Yellowstone National Park, the Old Faithful geyser puts on a crowd-pleaser every 93 minutes on average. No wonder, then, that some 90 percent of visitors to America's first national park include an Old Faithful stop on their Yellowstone itineraries. A new LEED Gold-certified visitor center opened last year to welcome more than three million park visitors

annually. The center's premier attraction is a functioning model of a geyser that actually spurts water.

Yellowstone draws more than 800,000 monthly visitors each July and August, but smart travelers can avoid summer hordes by using this massive park's abundance of hiking trails ranging from easy to difficult. Take the half-mile walk to Observation Point, for example, for stellar bird's-eye views of Old Faithful's eruptions with only a fraction of the crowds.

You can also find your own piece of Yellowstone by exploring less renowned attractions. "Some people think a single geyser is all there is to see," says Al Nash,



Grizzly bear.

the park's chief of public affairs. "Visitors are often surprised how much more there is to see and do." Indeed, what sets Yellowstone apart are its incredible intersections of animal,

plant, and mineral marvels.

AMERICAN SAFARI

Sixty-seven different species of mammals reside within Yellowstone, making it the best place in the lower 48 to see many of them. Park rules require visitors to stay 25 yards away from the bison and elk, but these behemoths frequently graze along roads and cause traffic jams. You're likely to see bison around Fishing Bridge, while giant-racked elk sometimes

gather at Mammoth Hot Springs.

Yellowstone has one of the few thriving populations of grizzly bears in the lower 48 states. They usually keep their distance, but stay a hundred yards away if you spot one. That's harder to do with bighorn sheep, which sometimes plant themselves dead center on hiking paths such as the Mount Washburn trail or on roads in Lamar Valley near Soda Butte. Drive by slowly and, if you're on foot, give the bighorns a wide berth.

FLOWER POWER

Summer is wildflower season, when dozens of species bloom, particularly around Dunraven Pass north of Canyon Village. Yellow glacier lilies capture the spotlight in June before giving way to purple-fringed silky phacelia in July and shocking pink Lewis' monkey flower in August.

An excellent place to photograph the fleeting flora is the Mount Washburn trail. Over three short miles, it ascends from whitebark pine and fir forests into alpine tundra with stunted trees and blue lupines. The climb is moderately strenuous, but you'll be rewarded along the way with possible sightings of butterflies and bighorn sheep. And at the peak, you're above tree line, with panoramic vistas of the park.

An easier but also luxuriant walk is the 2.5-mile path to Cascade Lake, where orange paintbrush and deep purple larkspur poke through the carpet of green.

YELLOWSTONE ROCKS

While Old Faithful gets all the attention, less punctual (and less visited) geysers dot the western sections of the park. In fact, more than half the geysers on the planet are found within Yellowstone's 2.2 million acres. An easy place to see



mud pots (which bubble steadily rather than erupting spasmodically) is north of Old Faithful along the boardwalks of the Lower Geyser Basin. At Norris Geyser Basin, you'll encounter fumaroles (steam vents) hot enough to take the wrinkles out of your clothes (but don't try it).

Mammoth Hot Springs, near the Montana border, is a vivid reminder of the volcanic explosion that created this wonderland 640,000 years ago. Magma beneath the Earth's surface heats snow-melt and sends it up through cracks in the limestone. As the water finds its way back into the ground, it leaves behind travertine terraces that seem to glow.

Summer visitors can avoid crowds at the Hot Springs (or other points of interest) by arriving in early morning or late afternoon. Better yet, spend the night in one of the park's historic lodgings, such as the rustic Roosevelt Lodge Cabins (the old Rough Rider loved camping here) or the stately Old Faithful Inn, with its geyser views. The Lake Yellowstone Hotel has the best restaurant in the park. But your favorite meal is sure to be the picnic lunch you assemble at Ernie's Bakery in West Yellowstone and enjoy in the wilderness. ■

[SMALL-TOWN PRIDE]

TOP JULY 4TH PARADES

From sea to shining sea, small-town parades celebrate not only patriotism but also local heritage. Here, three processions that stand out.

Bristol, Rhode Island

This coastal New England town hosts the oldest continuous celebration of Independence Day. The day begins with a flyover and cannon shot, followed by a nearly four-hour parade with floats and marching bands. The 2.5-mile parade route winds through Bristol's downtown and past colonial houses



A band marches in the Bristol parade.

once owned by shipbuilders and ship carvers before ending at the First Congregational Church, where war general and minister Henry Wright gave the first Fourth of July speech in 1785.

Wamego, Kansas

Covered wagons and people in prairie dress pay homage to the state's 150-year-old agrarian roots during the July Fourth parade in this riverside town that's also home to the Oz Museum. Other attractions include a high-energy, volunteer-produced fireworks display and the antique John Deere engine that powers the ice-cream maker at the Wamego Historical Museum.

Flagstaff, Arizona

From the pine trees of the Coconino National Forest to the San Francisco Peaks, rugged nature forms the backdrop for this town's Independence Day parade. The event salutes local servicemen and women and the firefighters who protect the area's woodlands. The procession runs through the historic downtown, which is also crossed by storied Route 66. Other festivities include a Hopi arts and crafts fair. —*Tanvi Chheda*



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Sunny-side up: Beach umbrellas line Dune Allen Beach (left). Tropical-hued cottages characterize the community of Seaside (above).

THE BEACH | By MARGARET LOFTUS

Florida: Gulf Coast Renaissance

ASIDE FROM the brief glare of the spotlight after the 2010 Gulf oil spill, the strip of shoreline known as the Beaches of South Walton has long been off the radar for most Americans. The comparatively little oil damage this neck of the Florida Panhandle sustained is now cleaned up. A new airport receives direct flights from major cities such as Baltimore and Houston. As a result, the communities that straddle Scenic Highway 30A and include 26 miles of broad sugar white sand beach are more appealing than ever.

BEACHFRONT URBANISM

A relative latecomer to tourism, the sleepy stretch from Seaside east to Inlet Beach was still being farmed and logged when much of Florida's coastline was already stacked high with condos. Most of the development here is planned, notably Seaside, the idyllic community of pastel cottages and white picket fences that pioneered the New Urbanism movement and famously served as the backdrop for the 1998 film *The Truman Show*. Renting a home here makes for a self-contained vacation, with shrimp and barbecue peddled out of shacks and Airstream trailers. Once a week, the community projects movies on a big screen in the town center. "You can just park your car and not drive it all week," says Michael Azzano, a New Orleanian who spends long weekends in

and around Seaside each summer with his wife and two kids.

Several other South Walton communities have a more traditional resort feel. In WaterColor, for instance, digs range from the beachfront 60-room WaterColor Inn, with private patios or balconies, to understated low-rise condos overlooking the placid Gulf. Use of bicycles, kayaks, canoes, and fishing gear is free.

FUNKY TOWNS

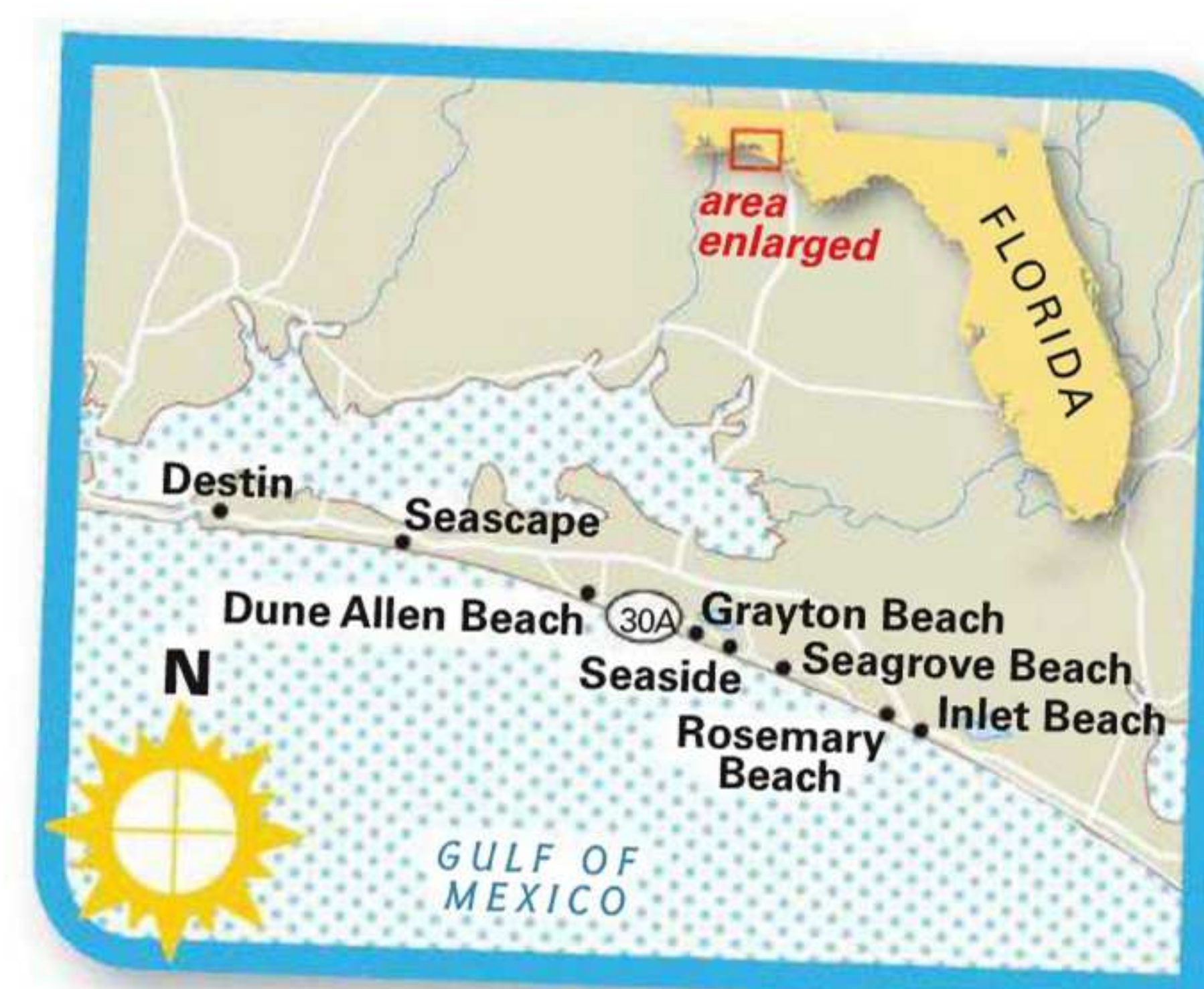
While much of the new architecture is inspired by old Florida—think front porches and paddle fans—the real thing is still alive in parts of the older towns of Seaside and Grayton Beach. Inland, oystershell lanes are lined with classic clapboard charmers on small lots thick with scrub oak. Head closer to the beach for roomier rental lodgings, many of them lavish. For a cozier setup with maid service, book one of the 12 eclectically furnished guest rooms at the Hibiscus Coffee and Guesthouse and wake up to a bowl of homemade granola, a tropical smoothie, and other wholesome breakfast fare.

LAID-BACK PURSUITS

Forget the longboard; the surf is only big enough for boogie boarding. Rent an ocean kayak or stand-up paddleboard (known locally as YOLO) with lessons starting at \$35 an hour. Off the beach, easily explore the towns and several coastal dune lakes on foot or bike via a paved path that stretches the entire length of 30A.

Sunset viewing is something of a sport at Gulf beaches. Here, regulars gather for cocktails at the rooftop bar of Bud & Alley's, a Seaside institution perched above the sand dunes. The patron who can guess when the sun will dip below the horizon—a bell rings to signal the exact moment—wins a free drink.

The dining scene is just as relaxed. Hit the Cowgirl Kitchen in Rosemary Beach for a casual, kid-friendly bite, like meatloaf sandwiches and chicken enchiladas. Sample local pompano and fresh Apalachicola oysters lakeside at Stinky's Fish Camp in Dune Allen Beach. The Red Bar, housed in an old general store in Grayton Beach, hosts live jazz in the evenings, but overall the nightlife here is pretty low-key, says Azzano. "The kids go out at night with a flashlight and hunt little crabs." ■



Red Bar, Grayton Beach.

BEACHES OF SOUTH WALTON IDC (UPPER LEFT), PAT CANOVA/ALAMY (UPPER RIGHT), MIKEL MANITIUS (LOWER RIGHT), MAP: INTERNATIONAL MAPPING

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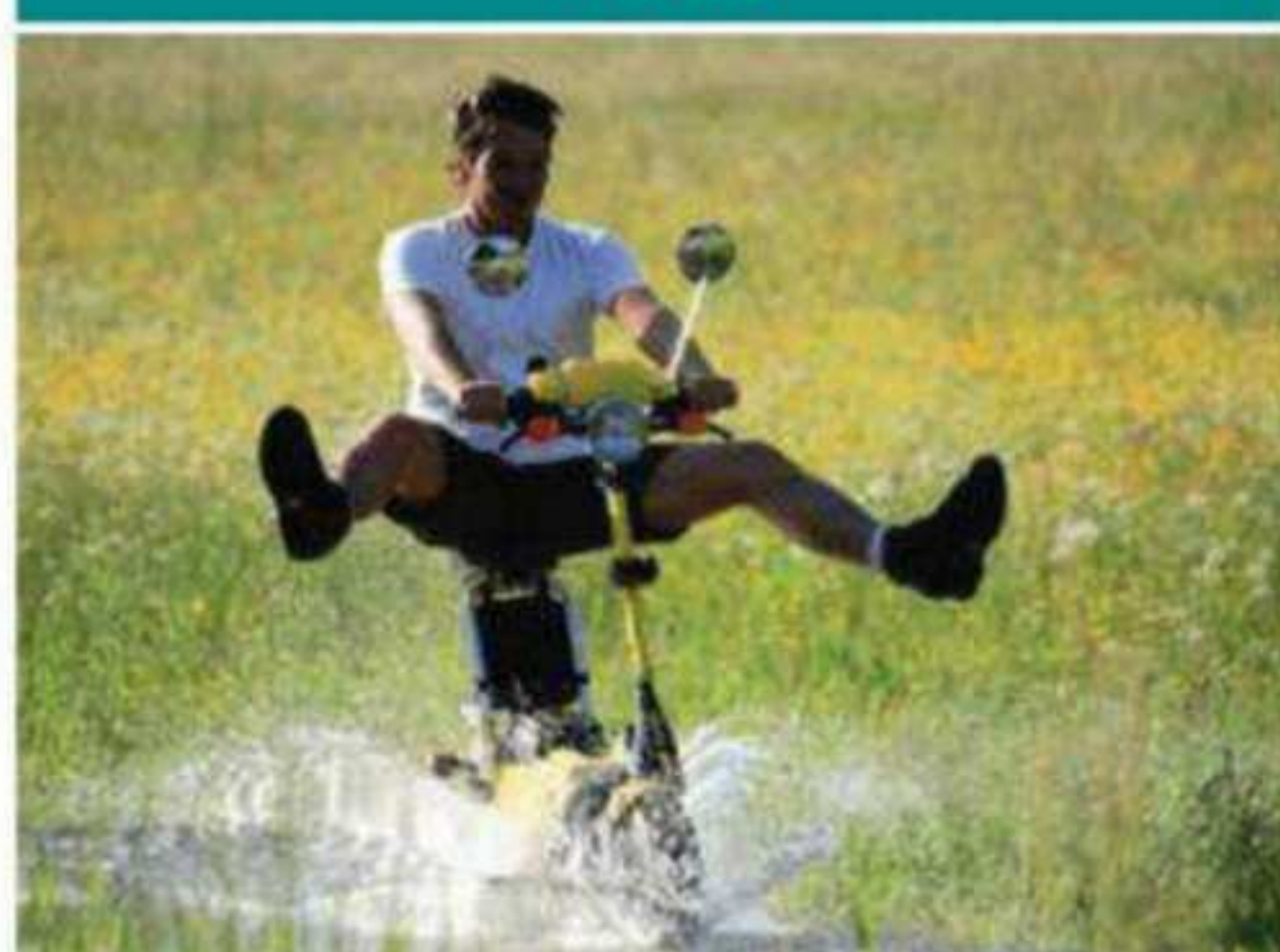
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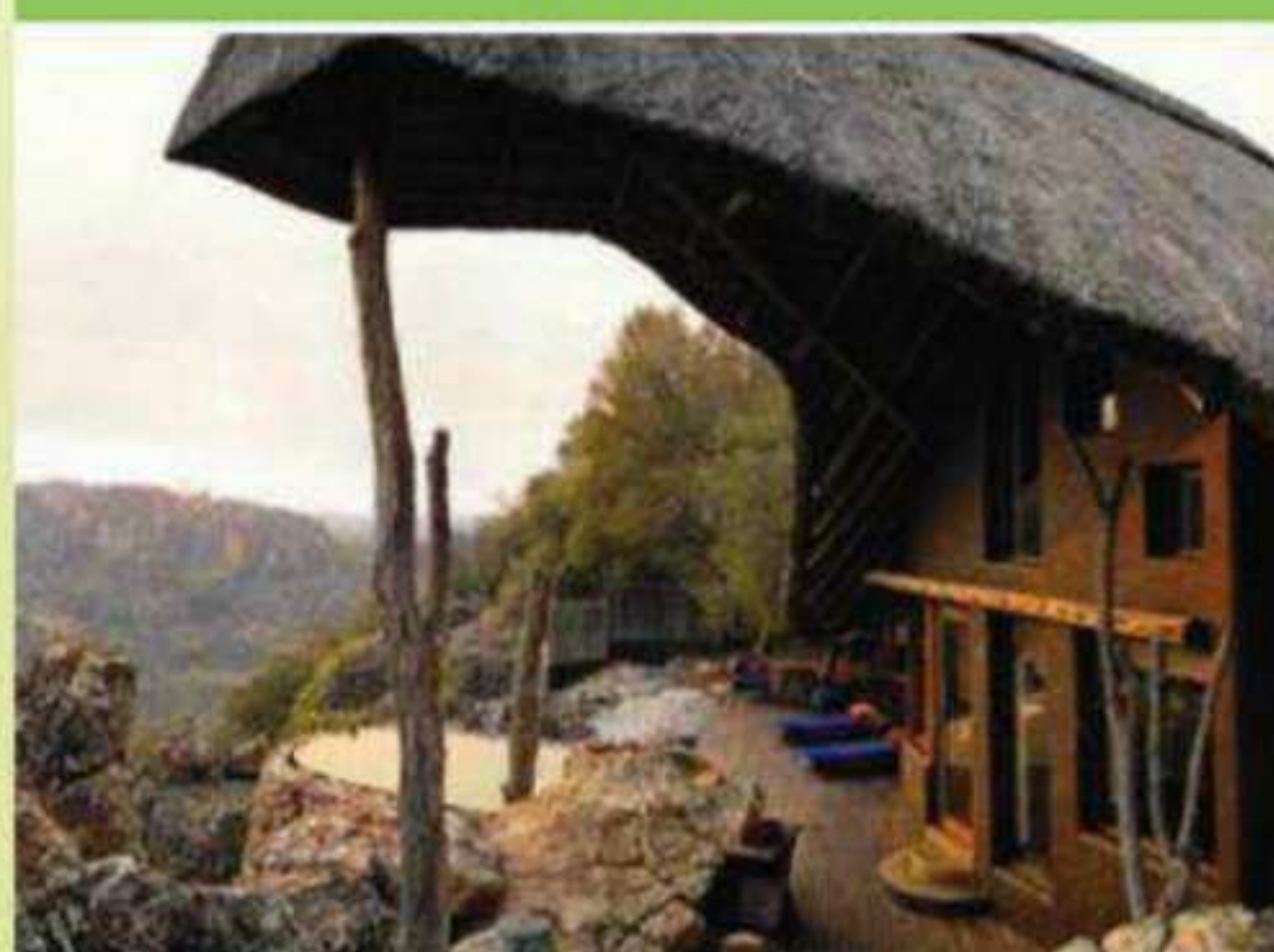
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A Fair to Remember

The Ferris wheel awaits. Here's how five state fairs stack up. | By JENNA SCHNUER



	OHIO	WISCONSIN	ALASKA	KANSAS	TEXAS
Date	July 27–Aug. 7 in Columbus	Aug. 4–14 in West Allis	Aug. 25–Sept. 5 in Palmer	Sept. 9–18 in Hutchinson	Sept. 30–Oct. 23 in Dallas
Famous for	Butter sculptures (first displayed in 1903). Last year's renderings of NFL players and cows used one ton of butter.	The Kids from Wisconsin musical theater group, returning for their 42nd fair. Also, the world's largest junior dairy show .	Last year's prize-winning giant veggie : a gourd vine that stretched nearly 47 feet long.	91-year-old Bardo the Clown , who lives on the fairground year-round.	Big Tex —the 52-foot statue (<i>below</i>) that has stood tall at the fair since 1952.
Don't Miss	The Civil War reenactment marking the conflict's sesquicentennial this year.	The Elvis impersonator performing dog weddings.	The Chugach Mountains backdrop and the chance to experience native culture and to buy locally made crafts .	The fair's ad campaign for "sheep thrills" and "raving bull."	Pig races , three times per night.
Eat	Candy buckeyes (chocolate-covered peanut butter balls), deep-fried.	Cream puffs (<i>left</i>). The Wisconsin Bakers Association bakes 24/7 for 14 days to meet demand.	Reindeer sausage, halibut tacos.	Pronto Pups , deep-fried wieners coated in a wheat and rice flour mixture, served on a stick.	Whatever is this year's winning best-tasting new food. Last year's champ: Fried Fritos Pie .
Blue-ribbon contest	Ugly cake competition. A past winner: a cake shaped like a cat's litter box.	Mooing competition. Winner takes home a golden cowbell, \$1,000, and a cow print jacket.	Veggie-growing remains the biggest game in town.	Horse-mounted shooting, with competitors dressed in cowboy garb. Also, the Not-So-Newlywed contest.	Best pie. Also, Best SPAM Breakfast .
Website	ohiostatefair.com	wistatefair.com	alaskastatefair.org	kansasstatefair.com	bigtex.com



[SUMMER THROWBACK] MOVIE SCREENS ON THE GREEN

Come dusk on summer evenings, many of the nation's village greens transform into alfresco movie theaters. Inflatable screens draw picnickers who lounge on blankets and in lawn chairs, vendors who hawk street snacks, and musicians who busk for the crowds before showtime.

Denver At the base of downtown's 1910 Daniels & Fisher clock tower, recently rejuvenated Skyline Park draws more than a thousand moviegoers to free Saturday night screenings of family favorites like *The Wizard*



of Oz. Meanwhile, Red Rocks Park's Film on the Rocks, 15 miles west of Denver, shows movies weeknights (usually Tuesdays) through August. Nestled among 300-foot-high red sandstone monoliths, the park's natural amphitheater touts perfect acoustics. Preshow entertain-

ment features local musicians and comedians. Tickets \$12.

Minneapolis In 1973, the Walker Art Center staged Summer Music & Movies, a series of films accompanied by live music. Now a Twin Cities tradi-

tion, the free movie series runs the first four Mondays in August. The museum's exhibition calendar sets the theme for events that begin at 7 p.m. with performances by local and national bands. Most screenings occur at Loring Park, but the August 22 finale goes retro with a silent film

and live sound track at Walker Open Field.

New York City For five consecutive nights (August 23-27), Central Park Conservancy hosts free movies at dusk at the Great Hill (enter at 72nd St.). This year the fest focuses on films that showcase American musical icons; a warm-up DJ spins at 6:30 p.m. In Midtown, Bryant Park's summer film series draws some 10,000 revelers each Monday (through August 22). The park's lawn opens at 5 p.m., when spectators vie for prime picnic blanket space and for seats at tables around the lawn's perimeter. Warner Bros. classic Looney Tunes cartoons, a crowd favorite, signal movie time. —Katie Knorovsky

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JOEL SARTORE (FERRIS WHEEL AND ROLLER COASTER), RICHARD CUMMINS/LOVELY PLANET IMAGES, ELIANE VANDERBORGHT, MICHAEL NEWMAN

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Festival International de Jazz de Montréal
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TOP FIVE

Cadillacs, Dinosaurs, and Neon

Roadside kitsch: Where bad taste is high art. | By **GEORGE W. STONE**

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Not every roadside attraction can be a Mount Rushmore, but sometimes kitsch can be cool. The world's largest twine ball (Cawker City, KS)? String us along. The biggest pecan (Brunswick, MS) and pistachio (Alamogordo, NM)? We're nuts for them. Here are a few pink flamingos of the travel world worth braking for.

1 ENCHANTED HIGHWAY, REGENT, ND > Seven sensational scrap metal sculptures line this 32-mile stretch of highway in southwest North Dakota, including artist Gary Greff's massive "Geese in Flight," listed in the *Guinness World Records* as the world's largest scrap metal sculpture.

2 CABAZON DINOSAURS, CABAZON, CA > Climb to the top of a life-size *Tyrannosaurus rex* for an up-close view of its teeth at this real-world Jurassic park. Purchase souvenirs at a museum shop located inside Ms. Dinny, a 150-ton *Apatosaurus* considered the largest concrete dino in the world.

3 LUCY THE ELEPHANT, MARGATE, NJ > America's oldest example of zoomorphic architecture, this 130-year-old, 65-foot pachyderm is actually a building that once served as a summer cottage. Lumber up the spiral stairs to Lucy's towering howdah for elephantine views of the Atlantic Ocean.

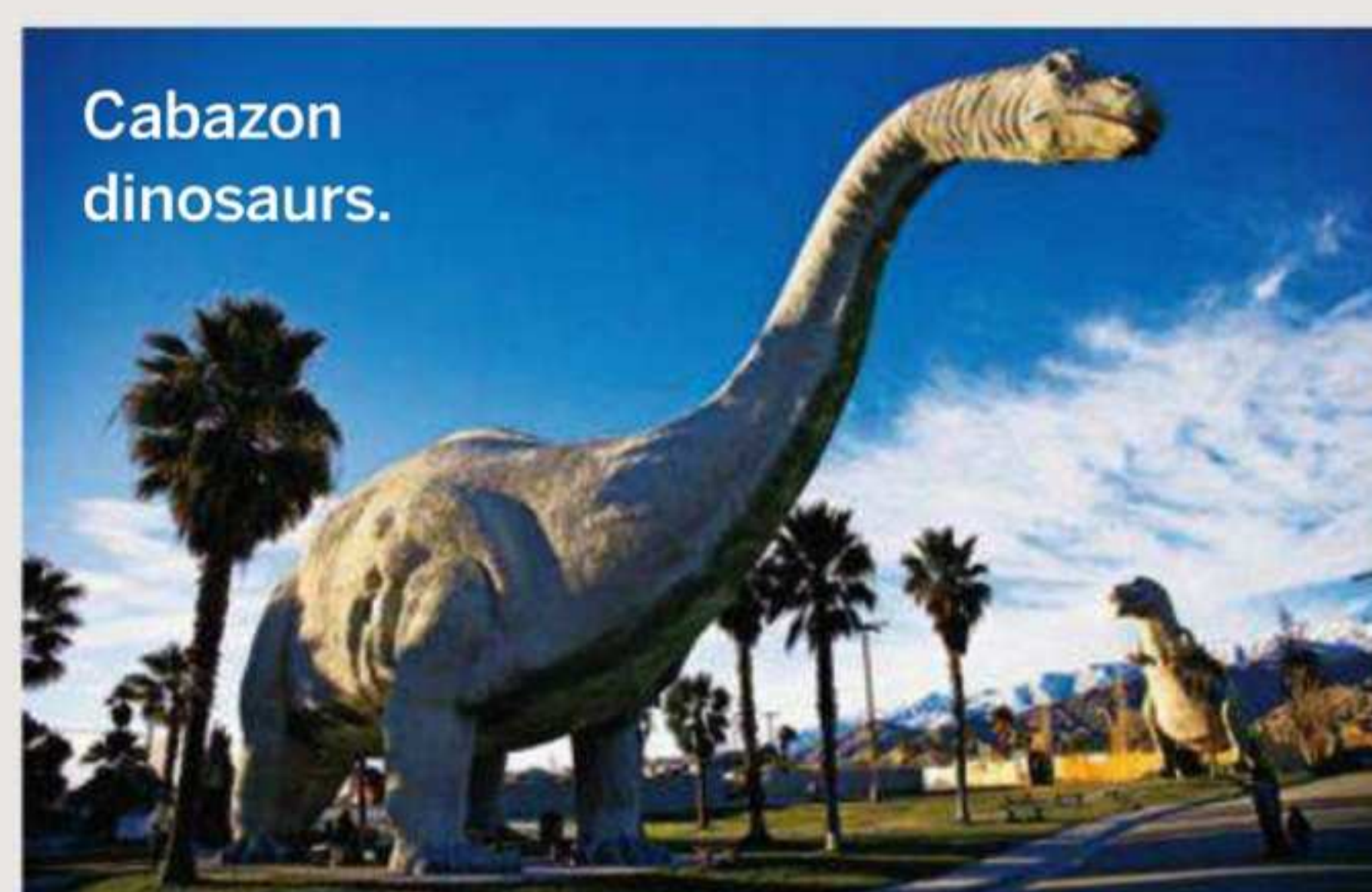
4 HOLE N' THE ROCK, MOAB, UT > Walk through a modern cave home with 14 furnished rooms carved out of Utah sandstone. If the excavation, which removed 50,000 cubic feet of stone, doesn't move you, take in the petting zoo.

5 CARHENG, ALLIANCE, NE > Circling a patch of lonesome prairie, 38 old cars painted gray form a replica of England's Stonehenge. Additional sculptures made from Detroit iron include "Ford Seasons," representing seasonal changes to the landscape.



Bright Lights, Big City?

Las Vegas: As the garish heart of all things kitsch, the Neon Museum glows as a homage to the signal Sin City symbol, the neon sign. With more than 150 pieces in its collection—from wedding chapel beacons to Aladdin's Lamp—this preservation organization features its treasures in an outdoor space on Fremont Street and in the Neon Boneyard.



Cabazon dinosaurs.



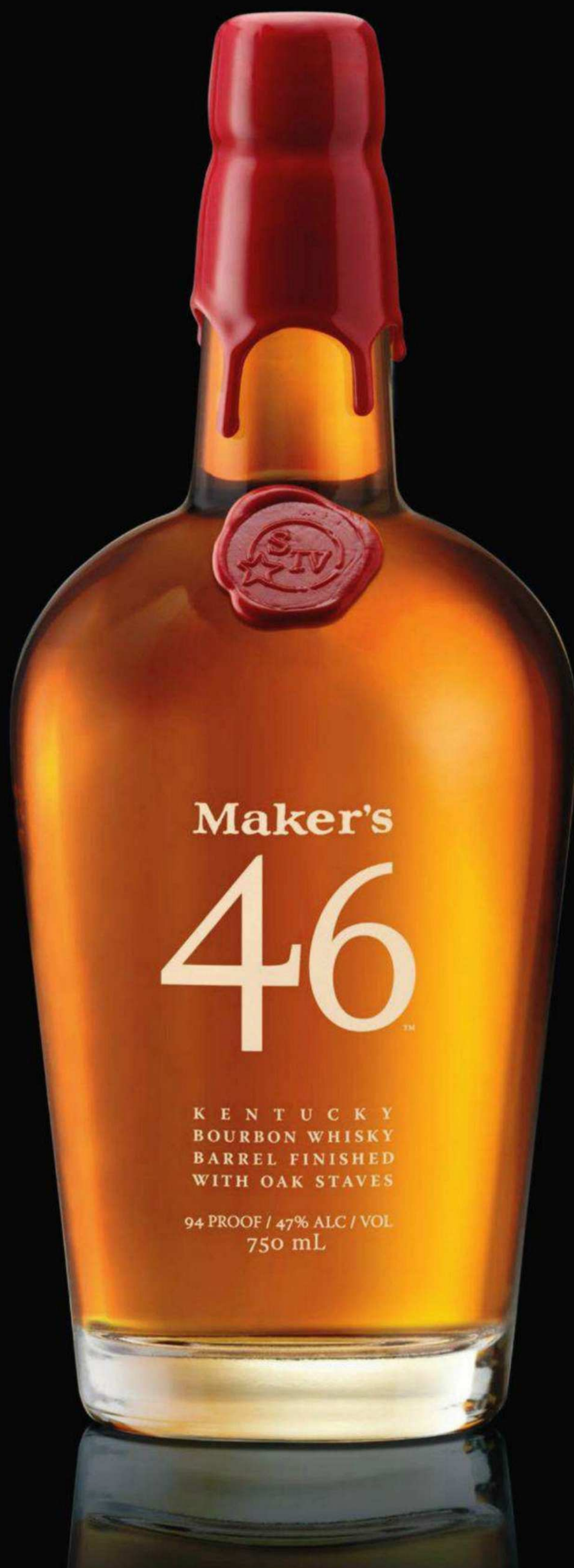
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A cool splash: The Colonnade's rooftop pool is a bit of L.A. in buttoned-up Boston.

HOTEL CENTRAL

Hot Deals in the City

As urbanites clear out of the city, hotels sweeten visitors' stays with savings and value-added perks. | **By MARGARET LOFTUS**

BOSTON. The hotter it gets, the more you save with the **Colonnade's** two-night Summer Meltdown deal, where the \$269 rate on the first night of your stay is discounted according to the temperature reading at 5 p.m. If the mercury hits 89 degrees, for example, you pay only \$180. Still sweltering? Head to the hotel's rooftop pool for a dip, cocktails, and panoramic views of the Back Bay neighborhood and the city. Recently renovated, the 230-room **Boston Harbor Hotel** (from \$350) at Rows Wharf is hosting a Summer Family Fun Package that highlights its strategic harborside location—a short walk from key attractions. The deal includes four tickets to the nearby New England Aquarium, valet parking, and ice cream sundaes at the hotel's outdoor patio overlooking Boston Harbor.

CHICAGO The **JW Marriott** (from \$279) in the landmark Burnham Building offers couples the Go Card All Access deal with overnight accommodations and two adult, one-day Go Card passes granting entry to 28 of the Windy City's top attractions, such as the Field Museum, and walking tours of the city's celebrated architecture. Housed in a former hat factory on the Chicago River, the **Hotel Monaco** (from \$219) is steps from Millennium Park and North Michigan Avenue shops. Each Tuesday, join the hotel manager for a discounted Segway tour of downtown, including Buckingham Fountain.

NEW YORK CITY The **Hotel @ Times Square's** Dinosaurs in NYC package (from \$235) combines digs at the 208-room property in the heart of Midtown with two tickets

to the American Museum of Natural History's new World's Largest Dinosaurs exhibition. The **70 Park Avenue Hotel** (from \$219) is capitalizing on its proximity to Bryant Park by sending guests off to the film series held there on Monday nights with a basket of treats. The Movie Star Munchies offer also features "red carpet" cocktails at the hotel's Silverleaf Tavern and an in-room movie with wine.

SAN FRANCISCO With the San Francisco Experience Package, guests at the **Westin St. Francis** (from \$220 per night) on Union Square receive a three-night stay and two San Francisco Explorer Passes, good for three attractions, including the Exploratorium and a Trolley City Tour. **Kensington Park** (from \$185) is running a Defending Champs baseball package tailor-made for guys. Overnight guests receive a \$25 gift card for tickets, concessions, or gear at the Giants dugout store, two "I Have a Giant Personality" T-shirts, a discount at Morton's Steakhouse, and a late checkout until 2 p.m.

WASHINGTON, D.C. A short walk from the Capitol and National Mall, the **Liaison Capitol Hill** (from \$179) is in the middle of the action. Regroup from sightseeing with the hotel's Dive In, Chill Out offer of accommodations, yoga, use of the outdoor pool, and breakfast for two. **The Fairmont Washington D.C.** (from \$209), in the city's West End near Georgetown, offers families of four accommodations, tips from a lobbyist on how to craft an agenda, and a copy of the U.S. Constitution or Declaration of Independence. ■



A portrait of MLK Jr. hangs in the Liaison's lobby.

URBAN HEADLINERS

Summer fetes include concerts, performances, and fireworks.

More than 60 local artists and performers, including the Boston Ballet, will be featured at the annual **Boston Arts Festival** (Sept. 10-11) held in Christopher

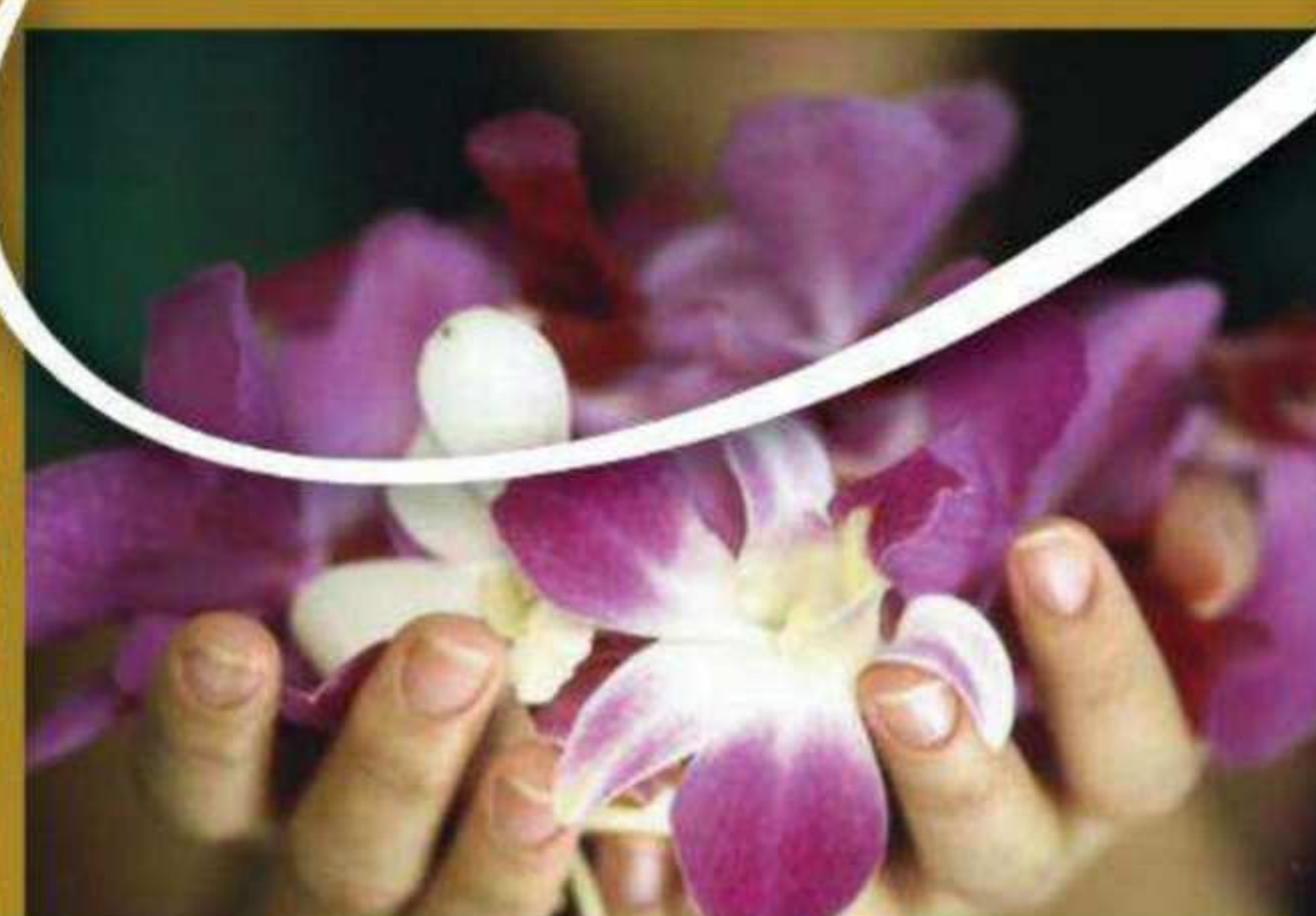
Columbus Park. The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds and U.S. Army parachute team, Golden Knights, headline the **Chicago Air & Water Show**, August 20-21, best viewed

at North Avenue Beach. **New York City's** Shakespeare in the Park presents *All's Well that Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure* at the Delacorte Theater in Central Park ending July 30. **San Francisco's** Outside Lands festival is a music, food, wine, and art extravaganza

with more than 40 music acts featuring Phish at Golden Gate Park, August 12-14. **Washington, D.C.**, celebrates the Fourth of July with a parade, a concert by the National Symphony Orchestra, and fireworks over the Washington Monument.

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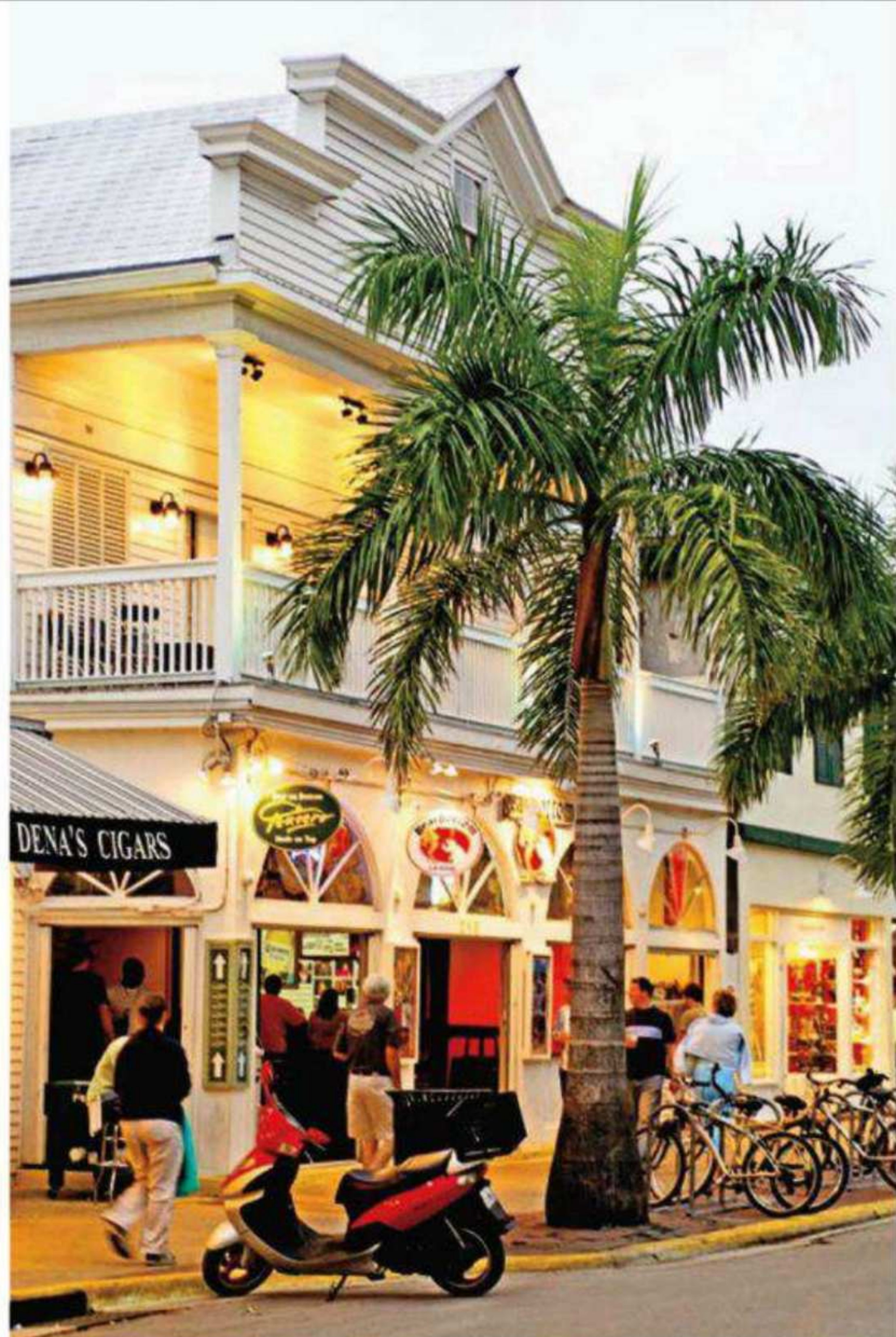


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State treats: Strolling in Key West (left), Smith Island cake (upper), and bizcochitos (lower).

TASTE OF TRAVEL

Hometown Desserts

Regional favorites that will sate your sweet tooth across the U.S. Just remember to save room. | **By DONNA TABBERT LONG**

JUICY cobblers, homemade pies, tall layer cakes: America has a famously sweet tooth. These desserts from potluck picnics eventually became synonymous with the state where they were baked: apple pie in Vermont, beignets in Louisiana. Some resulted from a regional harvest. Others were recipes brought by immigrants. Many took root in a particular city. As state politicians were pressed to recognize their constituents' favorite sweets, they passed bills declaring such specialties "official." Here are five states that honor their regional favorite.

MARYLAND: SMITH ISLAND CAKE Some call it an architectural marvel—thin, buttery rounds of cake stacked high and stuck

together with fudge frosting. Locals simply call it a Smith Island cake. Named after Maryland's island in the Chesapeake Bay, where the recipe originated in the 1800s, Smith Island cake was declared the state's official dessert in 2008. Taste the cake itself at the **Smith Island Baking Company**. Beyond the island, many places along Maryland's Eastern Shore serve up the dessert, including the **Watermen's Inn** in Crisfield.

SOUTH DAKOTA: KUCHEN Baked like a cake, kuchen goes well with coffee, especially when you're traveling the two-lane highways in northern South Dakota. Brought by the Germans who settled this area in the 1870s, kuchen is a sweet dough

usually filled with fruit. Now found throughout the state, kuchen became South Dakota's official dessert in 2000. Stop in at the **Eureka Kuchen Factory**, a small-town bakeshop and mail-order company where some 20-plus kuchen flavors include traditional peach, apple, prune, and spin-offs like chocolate pecan.

NEW MEXICO: BIZCOCHITO Step inside the tiny **Golden Crown Panadería** in Albuquerque to sample a complimentary *bizcochito*. Fragrant, infused with anise, the flaky shortbread coated with cinnamon is the state's official cookie as proclaimed by law in 1989. Brought to New Mexico by the early Spaniards, family recipes of bizcochitos have been handed down for generations. Associated with weddings and fiestas, the cookies were originally served with wine. Today, enjoy the cookie at Santa Fe's **Chocolate Maven Bakery and Café** with a mug of Mayan chile hot chocolate.

MASSACHUSETTS: BOSTON CREAM PIE

French pastry chef Monsieur Sanzian is said to have created this pie, actually a cake, for the 1855 opening of Boston's Parker House Hotel (now the **Omni Parker House**). Originally called Parker House Chocolate Cream Pie, it has been on the historic hotel's menu ever since. The extravaganza consists of two layers of cake sandwiching thick vanilla custard and glazed with chocolate. The official dessert of Massachusetts since 1996, the specialty is found throughout the state. In Boston, favorites range from **Mike's Pastry** shop in the Italian North End to Harvard Square's **Sweet** bakery, where the dessert has been downsized into a trendy little cupcake.

FLORIDA: KEY LIME PIE **Pepe's Café** in Key West serves Key lime pie with whipped cream on top, while the funky **Blue Heaven** heaps the dessert with airy meringue. Recipes for Florida's official (as of 2006) pie can be as different as the individuals who roam the Keys. The famous confection, named after the tart Key lime, is served everywhere, including the souvenir mecca **Kermit's Key West Key Lime Shoppe**. ■

ICY, COLD COMFORT

Local harvests enhance ice-cream flavors.

Named the official dessert of Missouri in 2008, the ice-cream cone was first promoted in the state at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis. Ice-cream flavors then were limited but no longer.

Today's countless flavors often incorporate regional bounty into their creamy goodness. During huckleberry season in northwestern Montana (Jun.-Aug.), for example, the tart, dark purple berry

is the most popular ingredient at **Missoula's Big Dipper Ice Cream**. Fans of **Bubbies Homemade Ice Cream & Desserts** in Honolulu savor scoops studded with Hawaii's homegrown macadamia nut. Oregon's signature marionberry goes into

all sorts of combinations—try the Buttermilk Marionberry Swirl at Portland's **Cool Moon** ice-cream


shop. **Jeni's Splendid** (left) in cities throughout central Ohio, features ice cream made with peaches and blackberries from the Ohio countryside.



PORT OF CALL

Straight to the Heart of Kauai

Off-the-boat excursions on the Garden Isle. | *By* JOHN ROSENTHAL



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Kauai may be nicknamed the Garden Isle, but it's no wallflower when it comes to adventures that raise your adrenaline level. Most of the mega-cruise lines—including Norwegian, with the only ship that overnights in Kauai—dock in Nawiliwili Harbor long enough to pursue one or more of the following escapades.

Zip It 3-6 HOURS

Zip lines will have you zooming from treetop to treetop, hanging from a harness. **Outfitters Kauai's** Zipline Trek Nui Loa (\$152) features side-by-side zip lines 1,800 feet long followed by a WaterZip, where you plunge Tarzan-style into a swimming hole.

Coastal Path by Bike 2-4 HOURS

The newest way around Kauai is along a flat, paved oceanfront path that opened in June 2009, part of the longer Ke Ala Hele Makalae trail. It runs 4.1 miles north from the charming town of Kapaa, which is about eight miles from port. The south end snoops behind waterfront

hotels and bars overlooking the Pacific Ocean before burrowing into verdant terrain. A half-mile before dead-ending in a sugarcane field, the path passes a secret bay known as Donkey Beach for the beasts of burden that used to sleep here after working in the cane fields all day. Rent cruisers at **Kauai Cycle** (\$20/day).

Deep Water Fishing 4-6 HOURS

Kauai is one of the few Hawaiian islands from which anglers can reach deep water quickly, so it's entirely possible to catch ono, mahimahi, and small ahi on even a half-day trip. **Hawaii Fishing Adventures and Charters** (shared trips start at \$159 per person)

will match groups of any size with the right boat.

Hollywood Stories 2 HOURS

Coco Palms Tours offers a guided tour of Coco Palms Resort, a film location for *Blue Hawaii*, *Fantasy Island*, and *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides* (\$25; 808-346-2048). The Coco Palms no longer operates as a resort since Hurricane Iniki damaged it in 1992.

Surf School 2 HOURS

Learn to hang ten with seven-time world champion **Margo Oberg**, who runs one of Hawaii's best surf schools (\$125 private, \$68 in a group) on Poipu Beach at the south end of Kauai.



Lush life: For an aerial view of island flora, make a beeline for one of Kauai's zip line outfitters.

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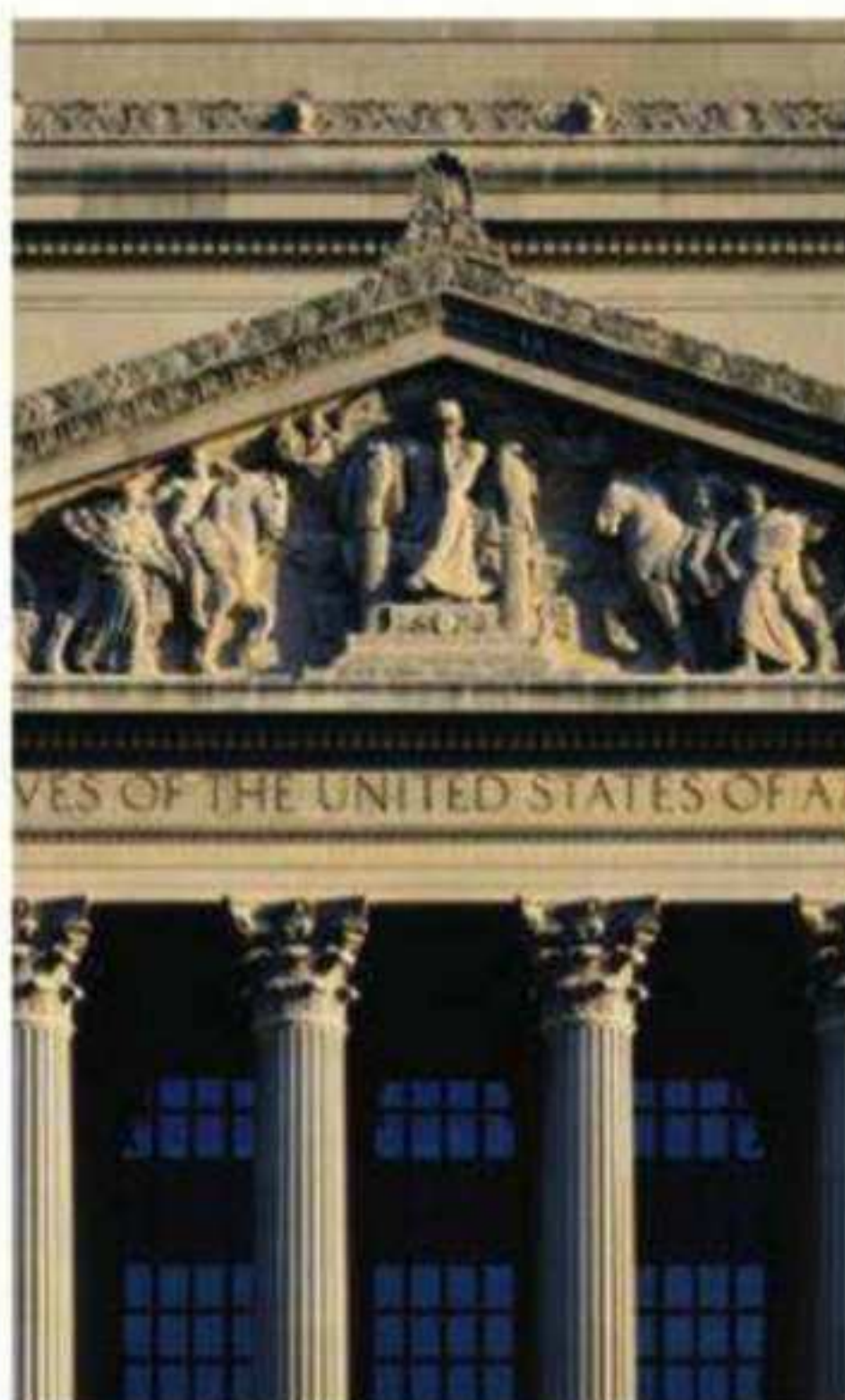
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1 DAY ONE

CULTURAL CRAVINGS

DC sets the stage for inspiring getaways where you can splurge and save.




-  Explore monuments, memorials and the great outdoors on two wheels with Bike and Roll. Take in the sights at your own speed.
-  Save with free admission to 18 Smithsonian museums including the National Museum of American History. Get your close-up with the original Kermit the Frog puppet, "Star Wars" costumes and Dorothy's ruby slippers.
-  Splurge with tickets to "Wicked" in the Kennedy Center's Opera House. Top off the evening with an Oz-inspired dessert at the Roof Terrace Restaurant.



2 DAY TWO

STIRRING SAVINGS




Charge your camera and skip the ATM. Only DC provides access to so many national treasures free of charge.

-  Pop into the National Archives for a groundbreaking exhibit *What's Cooking Uncle Sam*, that explores our nation's love affair with food.
-  Eat well: Jumbo lump crab cakes and apple pie at the Old Ebbitt Grill or pack a picnic with help from local farmers at historic Eastern Market.
-  Take yourselves out to a National's game at America's first green ballpark with a Family Fun Pack – dinner included. Kids can run the bases after the game.

3 DAY THREE

MEMORY MAKING

History comes to life in DC, where inspiring memorials and supreme monuments are just the tip of your family-fun adventure.

-  Breakfast at the Willard Hotel where Dr. King finished his "I Have a Dream" speech. Walk down the National Mall and find the brass plaque on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial marking the spot where Dr. King delivered that stirring address.
-  Explore the city's secret side at the International Spy Museum. Sign-up for "Operation SlyFox" and follow clues from the GPS-enabled game around downtown DC.
-  Oooh and ahhh at July 4th fireworks on the National Mall.



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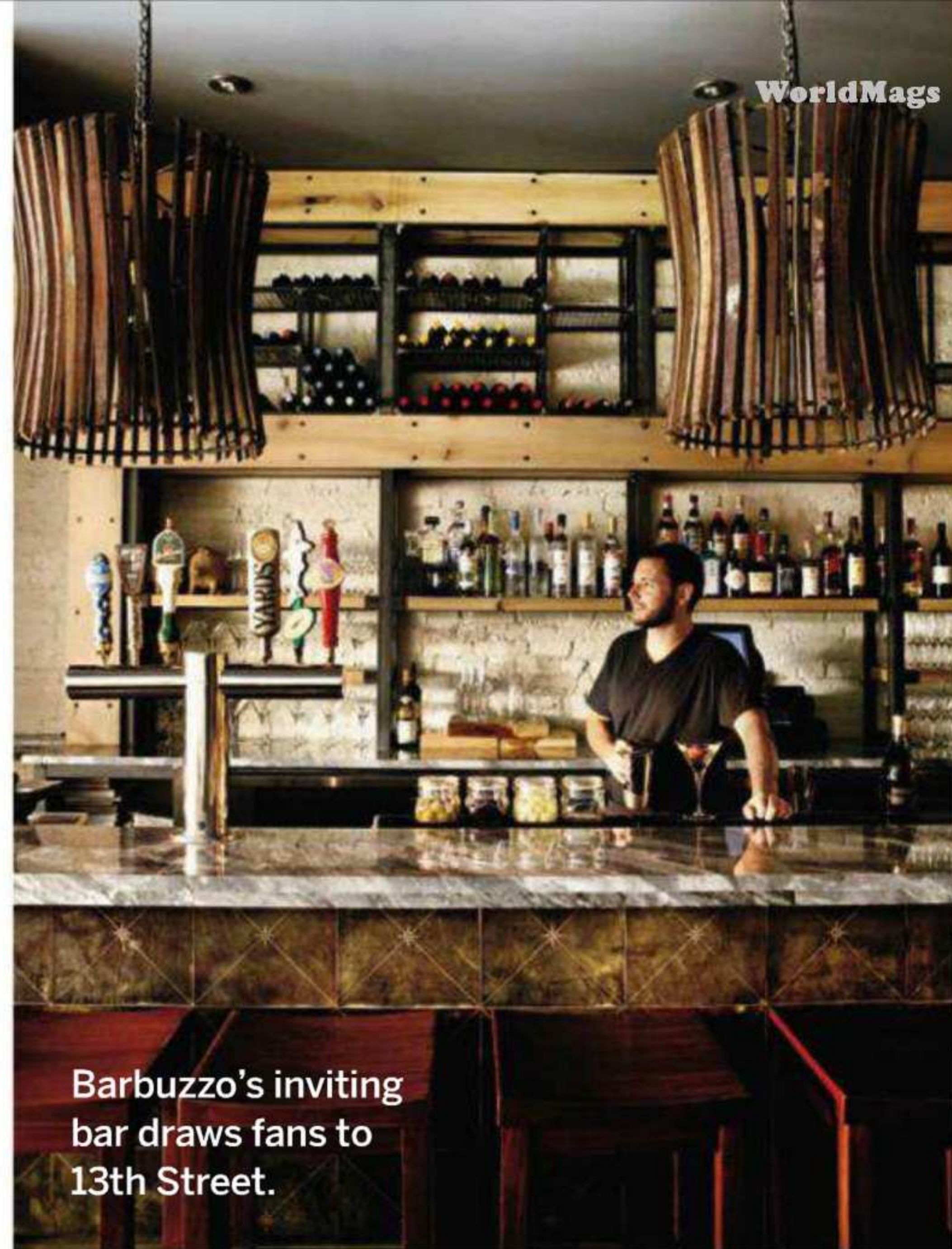
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Classic Philly: A cyclist finds his own perfect trail in Fairmount Park.



Barbuzzo's inviting bar draws fans to 13th Street.

48 HOURS

Where Freedom Rings

The spirit of independence lives on in Philadelphia's newest attractions, shops, and restaurants. | **By CAROLINE TIGER**

INDEPENDENCE MALL, Philadelphia's venerable national park, has transformed in the past decade from stale to spiffy, thanks to a new visitors center, a revamped home for the Liberty Bell, and the arrival of the National Constitution Center. Anchoring the mall is Independence Hall, where the Declaration of Independence was adopted on July 4, 1776, but just in the past year, a major new museum of Jewish-American history and a controversial memorial to enslaved Africans opened to add even more perspectives on the birthplace of American democracy.

Philadelphia's restaurant and arts scenes never sit still long enough to go stale. And the city has long been hospitable to artists and designers who crave relatively cheap space and a like-minded community. Visitors will find galleries for every taste and independent boutiques stocked with locals' work.

WHAT TO DO Jerry Seinfeld and Bette Midler headlined the glitzy opening of the \$150-million **National Museum of American Jewish History** last fall. Exhibits present the amazing diversity of Jewish experience

with artifacts ranging from an 1898 circumcision gown to Barbra Streisand's costume from the film *Yentl*. Check out the giant electronic map that traces the expansion of Jewish homesteaders into the West—and the replica of a covered wagon that shows how they rolled.

Across the mall, the **President's House** finally opened last December after years of debate over how best to interpret the role of slavery in the new nation. The outdoor memorial outlines the footprint of the brick mansion where George and Martha Washington lived along with nine slaves. Panels and videos tell the often sobering stories of the house residents.

Head about a block west to visit the revamped **Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent** when it opens in mid-September. Now in a larger gallery space, the collection of relics can seem random (wampum belt gifted to William Penn in the

1680s, Jimmy Rollins's Phillies uniform from the 2008 World Series), but it's actually representative of this endearingly odd city.

Along Third Street in Old City, **Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction** sells merchandise made using pre-Industrial Age methods: quilts crafted in Lancaster County; desk caddies made of wood reclaimed from local buildings. A drink named Root—a spirit based on the 18th-century recipe for root tea, the precursor to root beer—is made on site (but sold at local wine and spirits shops). Also on Third, **Sugarcube** stocks a mix of vintage and contemporary clothing.

Before leaving Old City, have a sundae at **Franklin Fountain**, an ice-cream parlor that looks like an authentic 1900s soda fountain. You might see one of the owners, two brothers named Berley, sporting old-timey mustaches and turn-of-the-last-century garb.

On the border of Chinatown, a gaggle of art and design spaces coexist with the gigantic box of the Convention Center. The cutting-edge **Fabric Workshop and Museum** showcases the work of recent artists-in-residence. The on-site store sells

limited-edition, artist-made objects, such as a silk scarf printed with a William Wegman image of a Weimaraner's spindly legs. To enter the art gallery **Space 1026**, tug on a cord in front of its doorway, and someone will let you in to see the experimental work on display.

Stop at **Reading Terminal Market** to inhale the smells at the potent Spice Terminal, watch



Barbuzzo's Margherita pizza.



ladies in bonnets hand-rolling soft pretzels at Miller's Twist, and down a whoopie pie at Flying Monkey Patisserie.

Leave the city grid behind with a bike ride or drive in **Fairmount Park**, which spreads out over too many acres to tackle on foot in one trip. Focus on the Fairmount Park Horticulture Center, where you can stroll through a graceful allée of cherry trees. Or be transported in spirit to traditional Japan at the Shofuso Japanese House and Garden.

End the day back in Center City perched on a dark red banquette inside the **Franklin Mortgage and Investment Co.** bar. The lengthy drinks menu harkens back to pre-Prohibition days.

WHAT TO EAT Philly is famous for its BYOBs—liquor license-less restaurants to which diners bring their own booze. French natives flock to **Bibou** on an unassuming South Philly block for its perfectly crisped scallops and pigs' feet stuffed with foie gras.

Philly's cheesesteaks are also renowned, but the unsung hoagie shops make more artful sandwiches without the long lines. Try the Bolognese, a lasagna and fried egg concoction, at **Paesano's** in the heart of the Italian Market.

Closer to Center City, **Supper** was a leader in the now thunderous farm-to-table stampede. Mitch Prenskey serves New

American fare sourced from a Newton Square farm. A found-object chandelier made with Jell-O molds and kitchen utensils sets the tone for the menu's clever, whimsical twists on comfort food. Standouts include a confit duck leg on a pecan-sage waffle.

On 13th Street, the buzz at **Barbuzzo** focuses on the rustic goodness of its Mediterranean menu. Order the egg and truffle *uovo* pizza and likely the most revered dessert in the city—the salted caramel *budino* (pudding).

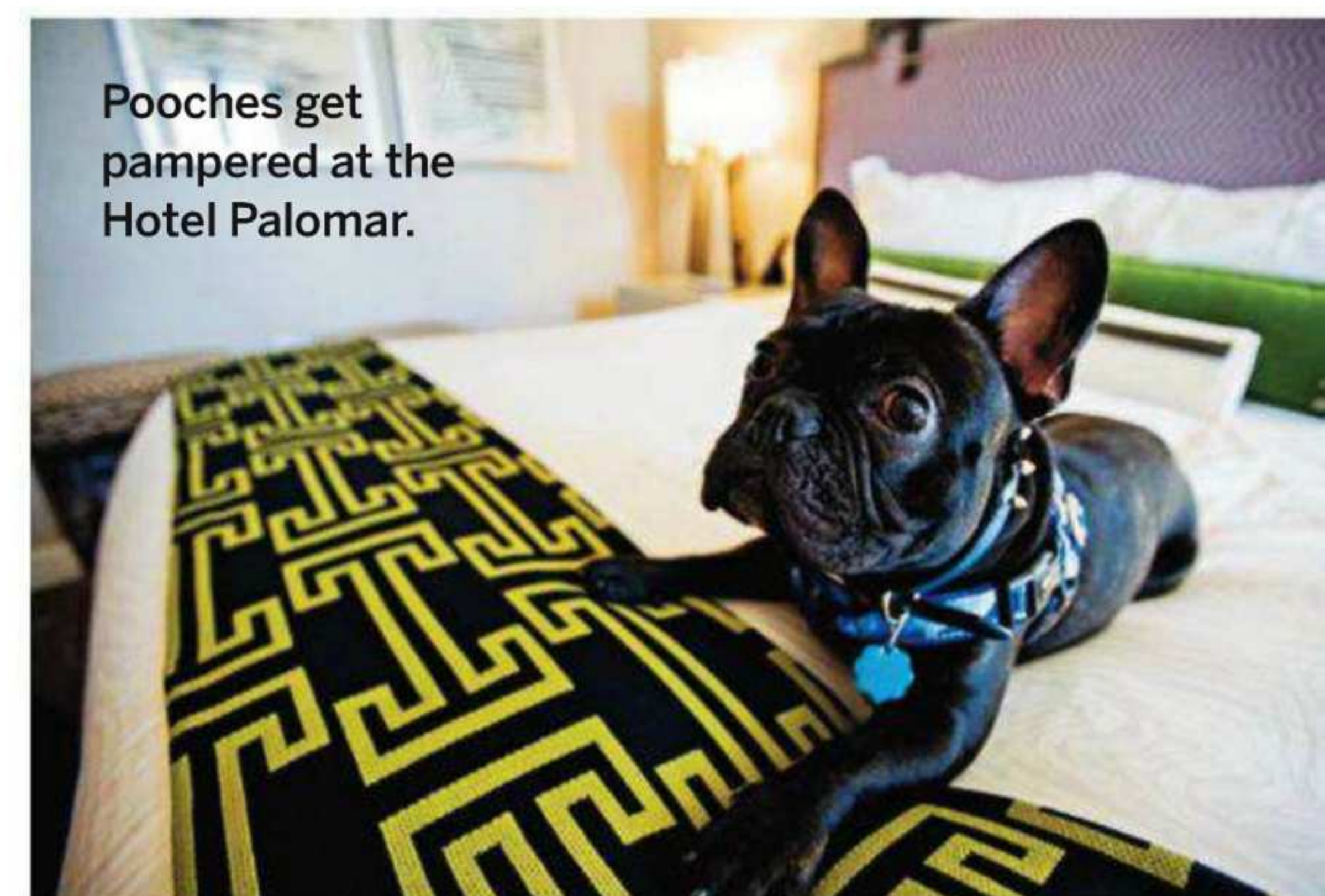
WHERE TO STAY “Grand” is the operative word at **Lippincott House** (from \$199), a restored 1897 mansion tucked into a

residential Rittenhouse area street where you can experience what it might've been like to live among Philadelphia society. (Take a turn at the grand piano in the rosewood-paneled parlor.)

Hotel Palomar (from \$199) gives off a wholly different vibe: a trio of neon, pop-art Benjamin Franklin busts greets you near reception. This Kimpton hotel earned LEED certification in part because of its careful renovation of the beloved art deco American Institute of Architects building.

Not all 15 rooms at the **Morris House Hotel** (from \$179) near Independence Mall are situated in the property's refurbished 18th-century mansion, but all open onto a private garden with a colonial feel.

The **Alexander Inn** (from \$119) provides a taste of turn-of-the-20th-century apartment house living. Repeat guests cite its generous breakfast buffet, friendly staff, and central location. ■



Pooches get pampered at the Hotel Palomar.

[ON FOOT]

NEWLY POPULAR EAST PASSYUNK

An old Italian neighborhood now buzzes with boutiques and eateries.

East Passyunk (pronounced Pash-yunk) Avenue cuts a diagonal swath across South Philadelphia. You can still find plenty of First Communion dress shops here, but in the past five years indie boutiques and contemporary restaurants have opened along the avenue at dizzying speed.

1 B2 CAFÉ > B2 caffeinates the neighborhood's growing hipster population. Locals swear by the Nutella sandwich and the Benna Cap, a shot of espresso topped with a blend of steamed regular and condensed milks. Vegans love the soft-serve nondairy ice cream.

2 GREEN AISLE GROCERY > Food writer Adam Erace and his brother, Andrew, once

lined up with their dad to buy fresh mozzarella for Sunday dinner at a nearby cheese shop. Now their gourmet market draws lines of its own for foodie essentials such as pork scrapple, peanut brittle, and espresso/dulce de leche brownies.

3 SOUTH PHILLY COMICS > This shop is part store, part gathering space for fans who drop in to pick up subscriptions and stick around to bond with comrades in comics. Its neighbor, Beautiful World Syndicate, has a reputation as a treasure trove for used vinyl. Customers can listen before they buy.

4 CAPOGIRO > It's impossible to choose between flavors like Ananas con Menta (pineapples with mint) and Cucumber with

Local Rye Vodka. Luckily the workers at this gelateria won't give you attitude about sampling three or six or seven before you make a decision.

5 NICE THINGS HAND MADE > Seventy-five percent of the art, jewelry, onesies, burp cloths, tees, pillows, and clutches sold at this bursting-at-the-seams boutique are made locally. Owner Elissa Kara looks for items that are “wonderful, well-made, and affordable.” Her art wall features a new local talent each month.

6 SWEET JANE VINTAGE > Philadelphia University fashion grad Carly Franks and her business partner, a seasoned vintage seller, curate this ever-changing collection with an eye on wearability and pieces that reflect current fashions. The garb and accessories lean heavily on the 1960s and '70s but occasionally stretch back to the '40s.



The King and I: An Elvis impersonator strikes a pose at Graceland.

EXPERIENCE

Can't Help Falling in Love

A cancelled flight leads to an impromptu visit to Memphis, with unexpected consequences. | By **ANDREW EVANS**

MEMPHIS WAS never the plan, definitely not on my list of must-see places. My airline ticket clearly said: Los Angeles to Washington, D.C., nonstop. So why are we landing mid-flight—in Tennessee? Rumors float through the cabin as we roll to the gate.

“This flight is now cancelled,” announces a flight attendant with a rehearsed smile. We grumble back in chorus, cranky passengers confronting a sudden change in plans: Instead of home, there would be airport food vouchers and a rainy night at a humdrum hotel near the terminal. Ten minutes in Memphis and I already have the Delta blues.

Lucky for me, a fellow passenger has a better attitude. “This is Memphis, people,” he announces, “and I’m getting barbecue. Who’s in?” The two of us grab a cab to Corky’s in East Memphis, where a neon pig offers a homey welcome. Inside, a chatty waiter gives us a play-by-play of the Clemson-Auburn game before laying down platters of dry rub pork ribs splashed in a mouth-numbing barbecue sauce.

Dinner is outrageously good, down to the hot buttered rolls and bacon potato salad. This comfort food is doing its job; my heart may be pining for home, but my

stomach is warming to Tennessee.

The next morning, I hail a cab to Graceland, where Elvis Presley lived with his parents, began and ended his marriage to Priscilla, and died in 1977. Neither the singer nor his classical revival-style home on Elvis Presley Boulevard has any personal draw for me—Elvis was my parents’ generation.

At the entrance, garish signs and lines of tour buses hint at something epic. The sounds of 1950s rock-and-roll emanate from a blinking, oversize jukebox. Near the ticket booth, costumed entertainers work the enthusiastic crowd. A woman with cat-eye glasses twirls in a pink poodle skirt. An elderly man with greased hair demands that I pose for a picture with a false vinyl backdrop entitled “Graceland!”

“Today is my 50th birthday,” says a woman standing next to me in line. “I’ve dreamt of visiting Graceland my whole life, saved up for years, and now I’ve finally made it.” A devoted fan of the King,

she has traveled all the way from Britain. I feel chastened. This woman is here as the culmination of a dream—I am merely filling a long layover. My visit borders on the ironic, but she is on a pilgrimage.

I follow her inside the 18-room mansion, eager to capture some of her passion. Graceland’s audio tour is mechanical and controlled (“no pictures, please”), though each room manages to whip me back to the seventies. The white couches, polished wall paneling, and a kitchen right out of *The Brady Bunch* are artifacts of an aesthetically bold era. The zany decor thrills me, especially in the famous Jungle Room. I can’t help thrusting my fingers into the plush green carpet and giving it a tug—the effect on me is pure nostalgia. As a toddler in that era, I used to crawl along the floor, gripping my parents’ shag carpet for support.

I was barely walking when Elvis died. Now I am walking through the home of the undisputed King of Rock and Roll, admiring his fancy trinkets, looking through his rhinestone-studded getups, and gaining insight into the man. Elvis was an inventor, charmer, dancer, artist, and loving son. Most of all, Elvis had fun. I don’t know any other building that represents an individual’s personality so strongly.

I’ve never had the urge to visit Graceland before—I prefer older structural icons such as Istanbul’s Topkapi Palace and Cambodia’s Angkor Wat. I think myself well traveled because I’ve seen Windsor Castle and the châteaux of the

Loire. I would never have gone looking for history and culture in Tennessee, yet I found both in the late 20th-century home of a dead rock star. Memphis grants me the rewards of great travel: a sense of the exotic, a light on the past, the joy of being there in person, and a newfound respect for someone I never knew.

Making travel goals is good. Bucket lists help us dream—but they can limit us, too, forcing us to rely

on biased ideas about ourselves and the world. The best travel carries us beyond our own notions and lands us somewhere new. Today, Memphis holds a larger meaning for me. It’s not where my flight got cancelled. It’s where I met Elvis. ■

Tickets for the platinum house and grounds tour are \$35 per person (www.elvis.com).

“I would never have gone looking for history and culture in Tennessee, yet I found both in the home of a dead rock star.”

FAMILY

The Sunny Side of Ski Resorts

Summer brings peak experiences at off-peak prices. | By ALISSON B. CLARK

Warm-weather getaways at ski resorts can cost a fraction of the peak season price, with lodging discounted by 50 percent or more in some areas. Even without snow, families will find plenty to do, from rafting trips and cattle drives to open-air concerts and festivals.

JACKSON HOLE, WY > Join a ranger-led hike, boat cruise, or campfire talk in **Grand Teton National Park** or hop on a horse-drawn wagon and ride to Bar T 5's chuck wagon suppers, where entertainment by a cowboy band accompanies the barbecue. At **Teton Science Schools**, the Wildlife Discovery Expedition takes families on a daylong search for wolves, bison, and elk, while a tech-enhanced version of the tour uses iPads to track wildlife. Monday evening programs start with a GPS-guided scavenger hunt and end with s'mores around a campfire.

ASPEN/SNOWMASS, CO > At the **Snowmass Rodeo** each Wednesday night in summer, kids can test their mettle on a mechanical bull before the professionals ride broncos. On the slopes, Shaun White wannabes can try mountain boarding—think snowboards on wheels—with lessons, rentals, and a kid-friendly course in Snowmass Village. At the village mall, the new Ice Age Discovery Center showcases mastodon and mammoth fossils unearthed



Snowmass rodeo.

last year. Just down the road in Aspen, novice skateboarders are welcome at the Rio Grande Skateboard Park, while adventurers of all ages can explore a silver mining ghost town during a tour with the **Aspen Center for Environmental Studies**.

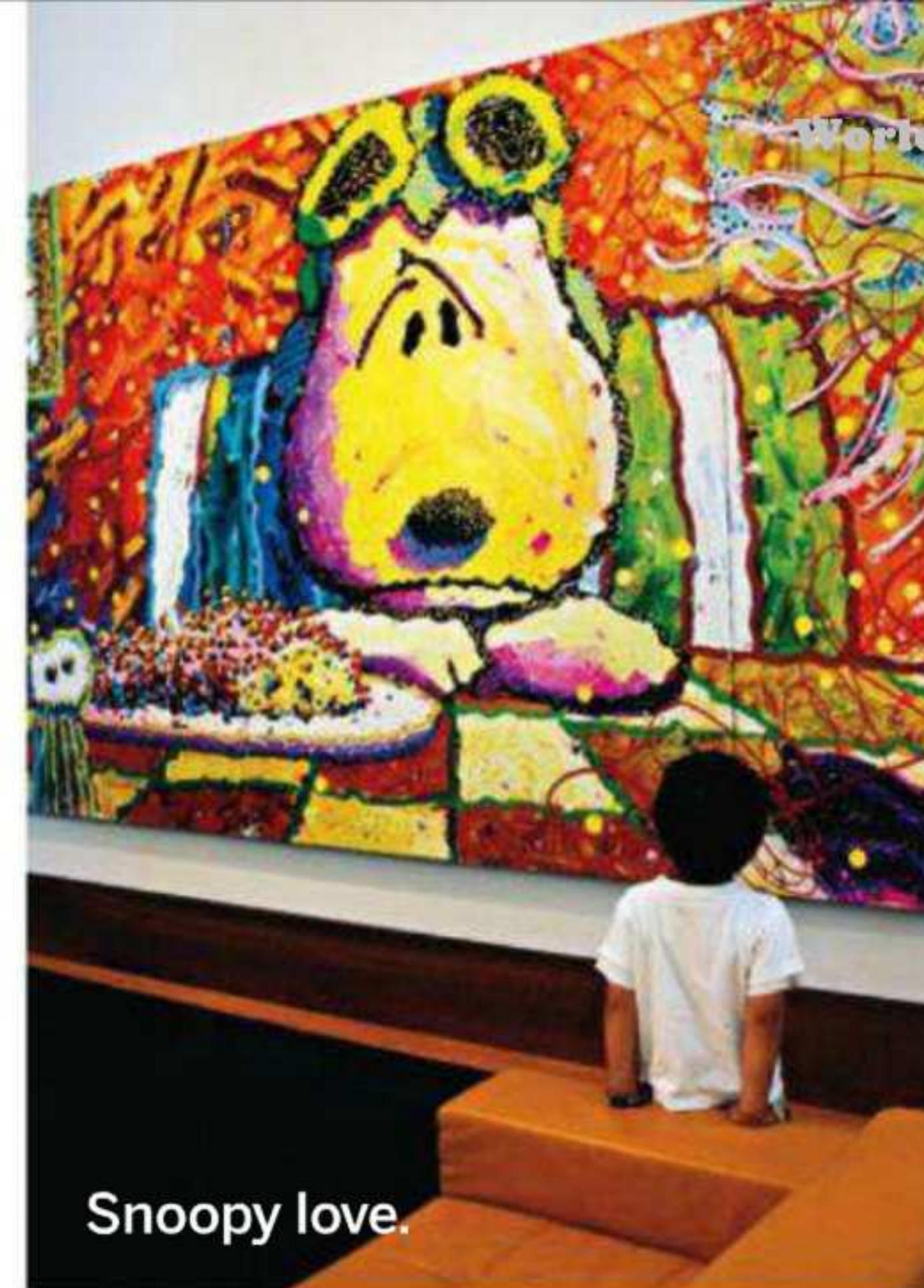
SMUGGLERS' NOTCH, VT > Warm weather doesn't stop the Alaskan huskies of **Eden Dog Sledding** from mushing: Dog carting in wheeled sleds gives families the thrill of the Iditarod without the subzero temperatures. The area's newest addition, **ArborTrek Canopy Adventures**, combines treetop zip lines with suspension bridges and rappelling stations for a

high-flying ride. Guests at the 1,200-acre **Smugglers' Notch** resort have access to eight pools and four waterslides. The resort's popular Via Ferrata—a sport combining climbing, hiking, and scrambling over boulders—lets parents and kids climb waterfalls and navigate a high-ropes course with a guide.

CRYSTAL MOUNTAIN, WA > When the snow recedes, wildflowers cover Crystal Mountain, as do mountain bike trails: Beginner routes wind past lakes and an old mining camp. The Mount Rainier gondola runs daily with lofty views of the surrounding peaks, and at Mount Rainier National Park, just six miles away, even the youngest travelers can hit one of the stroller-friendly trails. No roads traverse the alpine meadows of the Norse Peak Wilderness, but with **Crystal Mountain Outfitters**, families (including kids five years and older) can explore the area on horseback.



Balancing on logs in Grand Teton.



Snoopy love.

[ITINERARY]

CALIFORNIA WINE COUNTRY

EXPLORE **Winery Park** at the Francis Ford Coppola Winery in Geyserville is perfect for whiling away hot summer days. Swim in an expansive pool, play bocce, or recline on a chaise lounge. On the south end of Sonoma County, in Petaluma, experience farm life during a 90-minute tour of **McClelland's Dairy**. Visit calves in the nursery, witness the milking parlor in action, and sample organic butter. With endless cartoons, Santa Rosa's **Charles M. Schulz Museum** pays homage to the creator of the "Peanuts" comic strip.

EAT On the coast, in Bodega Bay, the **Tides Wharf Restaurant** specializes in seafood. Peer out the window and watch as fishermen unload their daily catch, then enjoy crab cakes made with Dungeness crab fresh off those very boats. In downtown Sonoma, visit **Basque Boulangerie Café** on the square for kid favorites such as grilled cheese and PB&J.

STAY Wake up to the guttural calls of flamingos at **Safari West**, a privately owned animal park in the hills east of Santa Rosa. All 30 luxury safari tents have private outdoor patios that overlook a spacious giraffe habitat. —Matt Villano



Home Run Fun: Take in a ball game at one of these minor league parks, which offer family-friendly activities. **Virginia's Richmond Flying Squirrels** host weekly giveaways, a Boy Scout sleepover, theme nights (*Harry Potter* night is July 23), and fireworks. Join the team's free kids' club and get free admission to Sunday home games. **Maine's Portland Sea Dogs** let kids run the bases after Sunday games. Other baseball leagues are pocket-friendly: The **Lake Erie Crushers**, 30 minutes outside of Cleveland, offer fans four tickets, hot dogs, sodas, and popcorn for \$44. —Jeannette Kimmel



STAY PICKY.

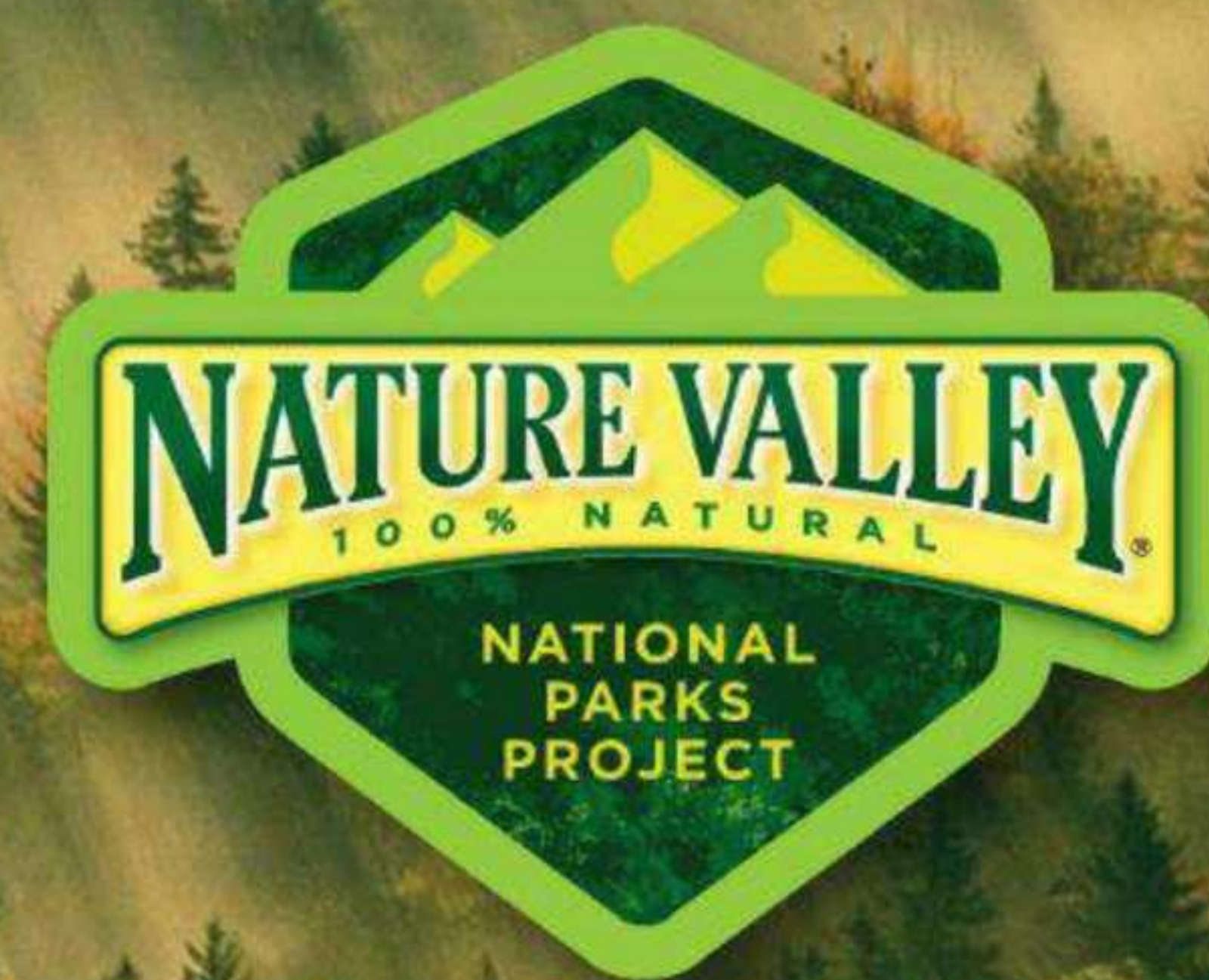


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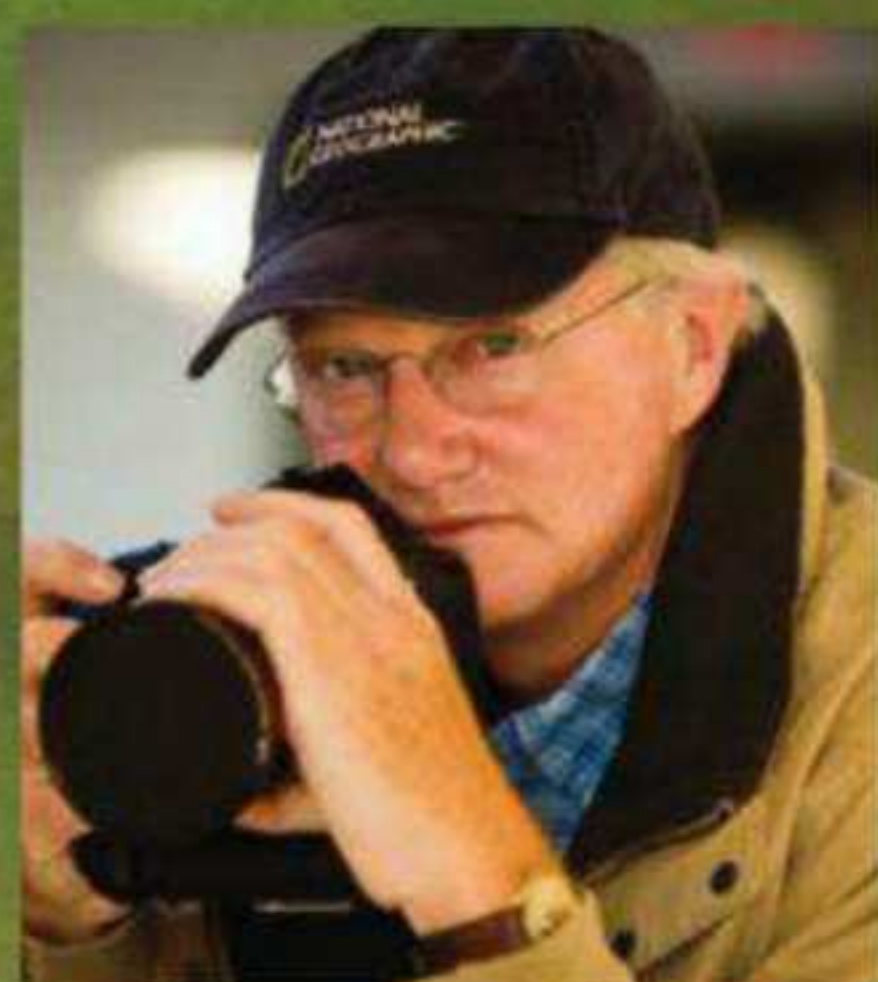


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Photograph by Michael Melford; inset photo of Michael Melford photographed by Elizabeth Nicole.

Aerial view of forest, Acadia National Park, Maine



MICHAEL MELFORD

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHER, ON

America's National Parks

"*Acadia National Park* has been very good to me. My first visit to a national park was just after graduation from high school, when I went to Acadia, driving all night and getting there in time for sunrise on top of Cadillac Mountain—the first place you can view the sun come up in the United States from October to March. I was definitely the first guy to see it the day I took this picture [above]. Acadia was also my first *National Geographic Traveler* assignment, which resulted in a cover story. Twelve years later, ironically, my very first assignment for *National Geographic* magazine was also in Acadia.

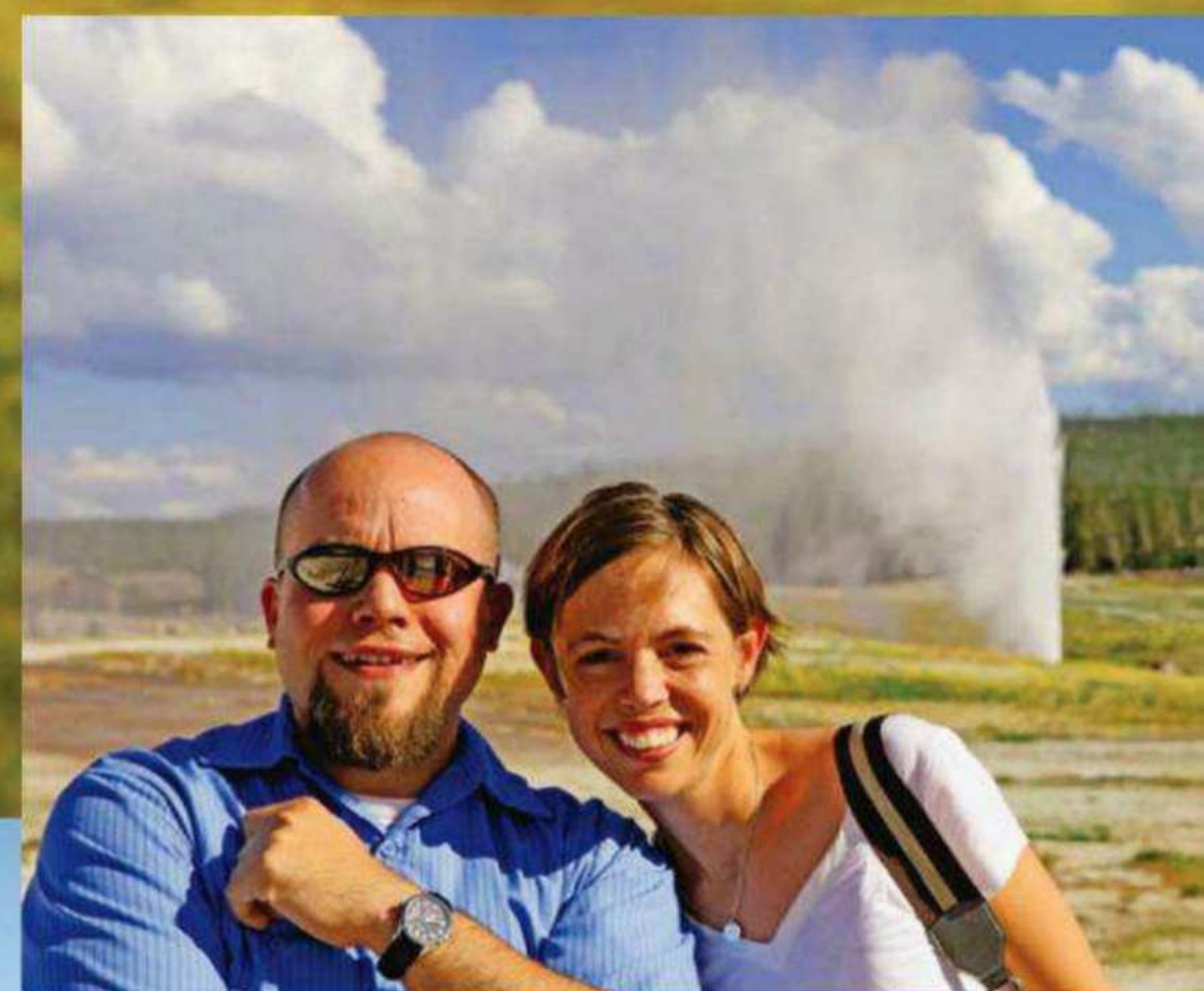
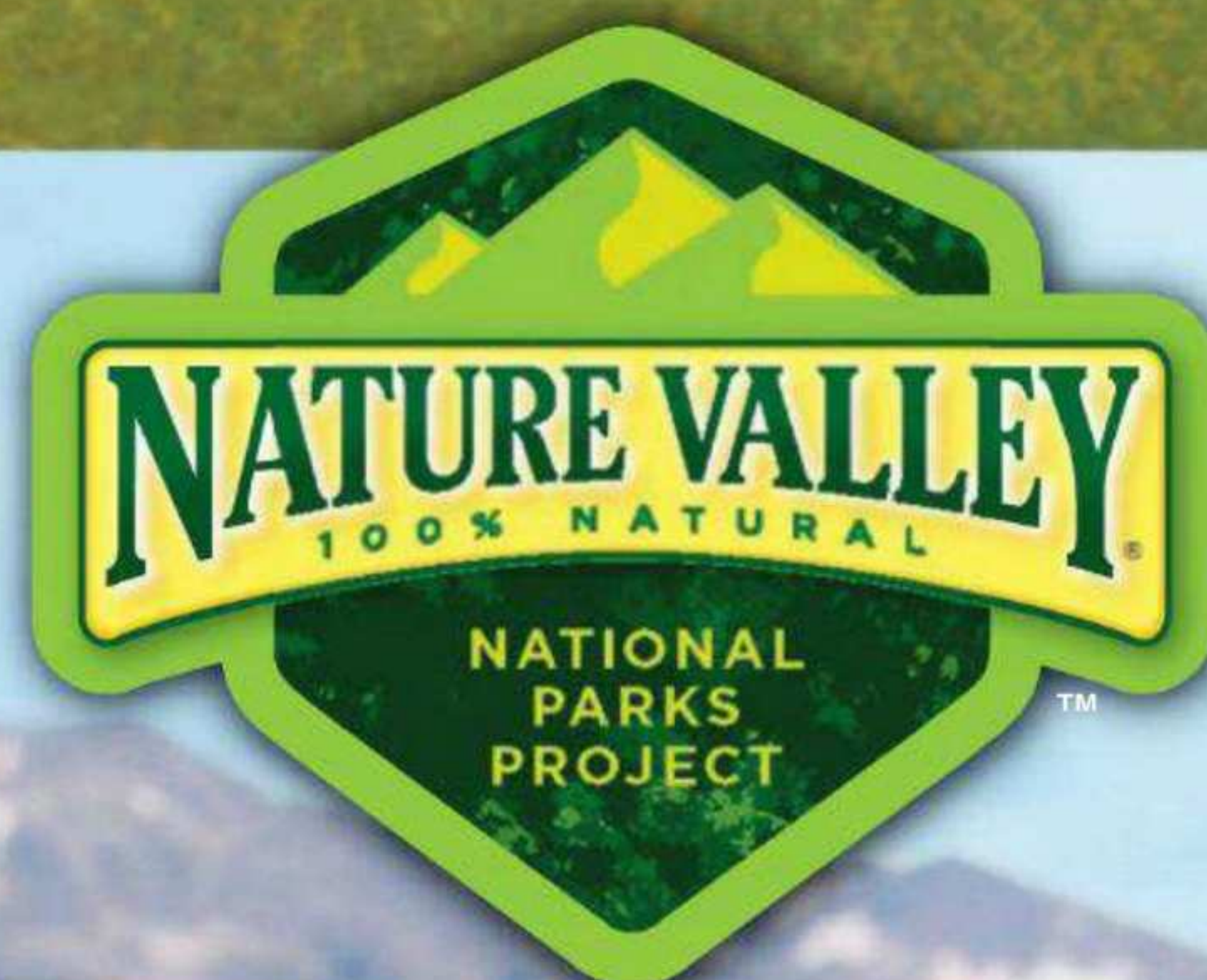
Since then, I've done stories on Death Valley, Great Smoky Mountains, and Glacier National Parks for the magazine, as well as a cover story on the state of our national parks in 2006. I have traveled all over the world, and there's no park system anywhere like ours."

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ADVENTURE

I Tube, You Tube, We All Tube

Top spots to float the river | *By* AMELIA MULARZ

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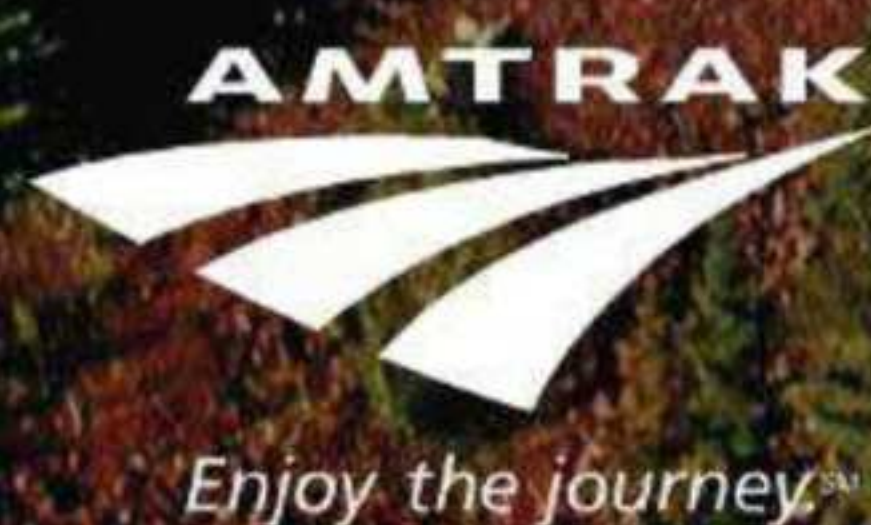
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Greg Crance, aka the Famous River Hot Dog Man, has spent the past 24 seasons feeding river inner tubers from a buoyant food stand on the Delaware River. "River tubing is an all-American activity," Crance says. "It reminds me of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn." Below are five waterways perfect for this classic pastime.

DELAWARE RIVER, NEW JERSEY > Some 20 miles from where George Washington famously crossed the river during the Revolutionary War, **Delaware River Tubing** in Frenchtown sets guests adrift on a five- or six-mile ride. Trips include a free meal from the Famous River Hot Dog Man, as well as views of the Devil's Tea Table cliff.

APPLE RIVER, WISCONSIN > Most rides down the Apple last about three hours, but visitors usually hang around the shores much longer. Here in Somerset, western Wisconsin (an hour from Minneapolis), local outfitters such as **River's Edge** and **Float Rite Park** keep the party going with concerts and camping.

GUADALUPE RIVER, TEXAS > In the Texas Hill Country, the "Horseshoe Loop," a one-mile stretch on the upper reaches of the Lower Guadalupe, delivers an easy tubing trip. Bobbing coolers are a common sight as food and alcohol are welcome along the route.

SALT RIVER, ARIZONA > Moseying down the Salt in a tube is probably the most refreshing way to explore the Arizona desert. Tonto National Forest brims with three-million acres of pine forest, mountains, and cactus, but when temperatures soar above 100°F in the summer, the river is the best place to be. Put in on the Lower Salt at Blue Point, with its large beach and scenic mesquite grove.



ICHETUCKNEE RIVER, FLORIDA > Though the spring-fed waters in Ichetucknee Springs State Park attract crowds of college kids (the University of Florida in Gainesville is less than an hour away), tubing the Ichetucknee isn't a wet-n-wild party. In fact, there's no alcohol or food allowed on the river. Lush vegetation and great blue heron sightings make for a memorable time.



Tube time: Float on Florida's Ichetucknee River; buy a wiener on New Jersey's Delaware River.



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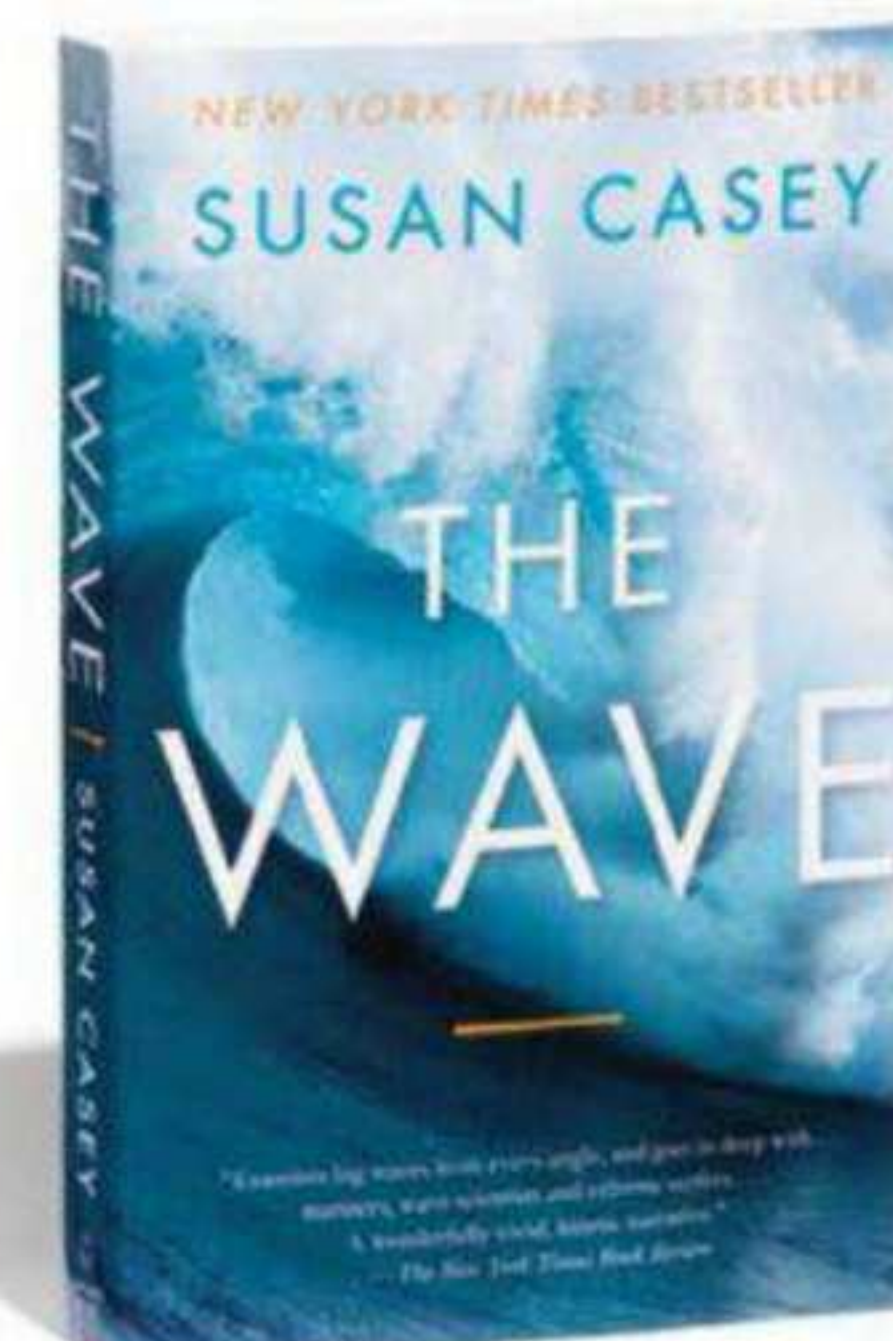
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THE WAVE**SUSAN CASEY**

New in paperback, Casey's adrenaline-fueled account of the "rogues, freaks, and giants of the ocean" makes you think twice about that wet lapping at your bare feet. In addition to explaining the natural forces that create extreme waves, she features the people who go in search of them, such as Hawaiian surfer Laird Hamilton who helped pioneer riding on monster waves of 70 to 80 feet. This book may have you just wanting to stick close to shore.

**THE LONG-SHINING WATERS****DANIELLE SOSIN**

This debut novel weaves together the stories of three women in different centuries who share a geography, Lake Superior. Author Danielle Sosin evokes the unforgettable pull of this watery expanse on a 17th-century Ojibwa woman, an early 1900s Norwegian couple dealing with a miscarriage, and a bar owner in 2000 suddenly faced with the loss of her livelihood.

FINDING EVERETT RUESS**DAVID ROBERTS**

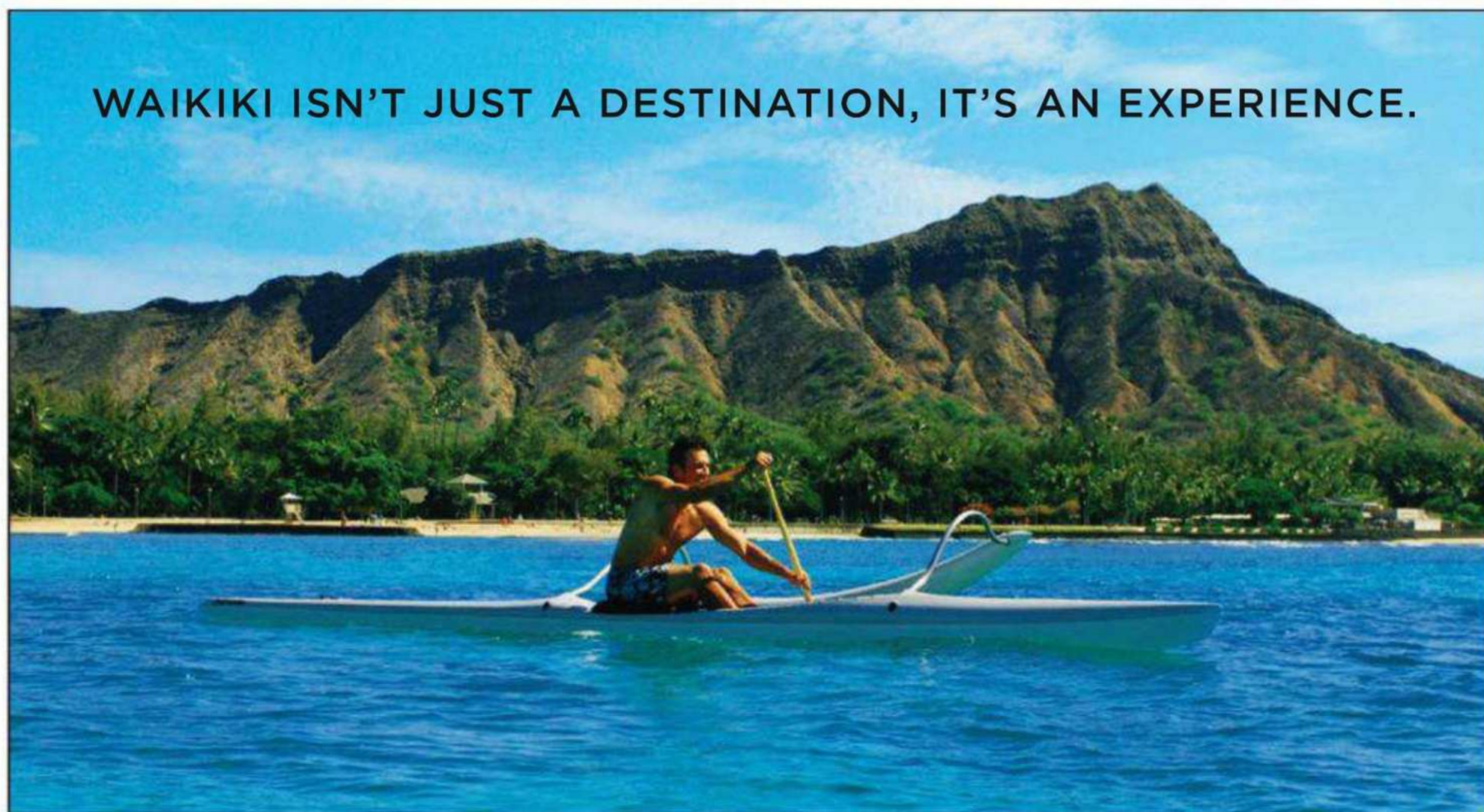
If you liked Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild*, you'll find uncanny parallels between Chris McCandless and Everett Ruess. Both young men went on solo treks into the wilderness and never returned. In this book, Roberts tells the compelling—and still unsolved—story of Ruess, who disappeared in 1934 at the age of 20 in southern Utah's red-rock canyon country.

MAINE**J. COURTNEY SULLIVAN**

A beachfront cottage in Maine is the setting for this three-generational tale of love and loss. As the women of the Kelleher family perform their ritual summer gathering, the edge of the continent draws out deep-buried grievances—and abiding bonds. —Amy Alipio and Don George

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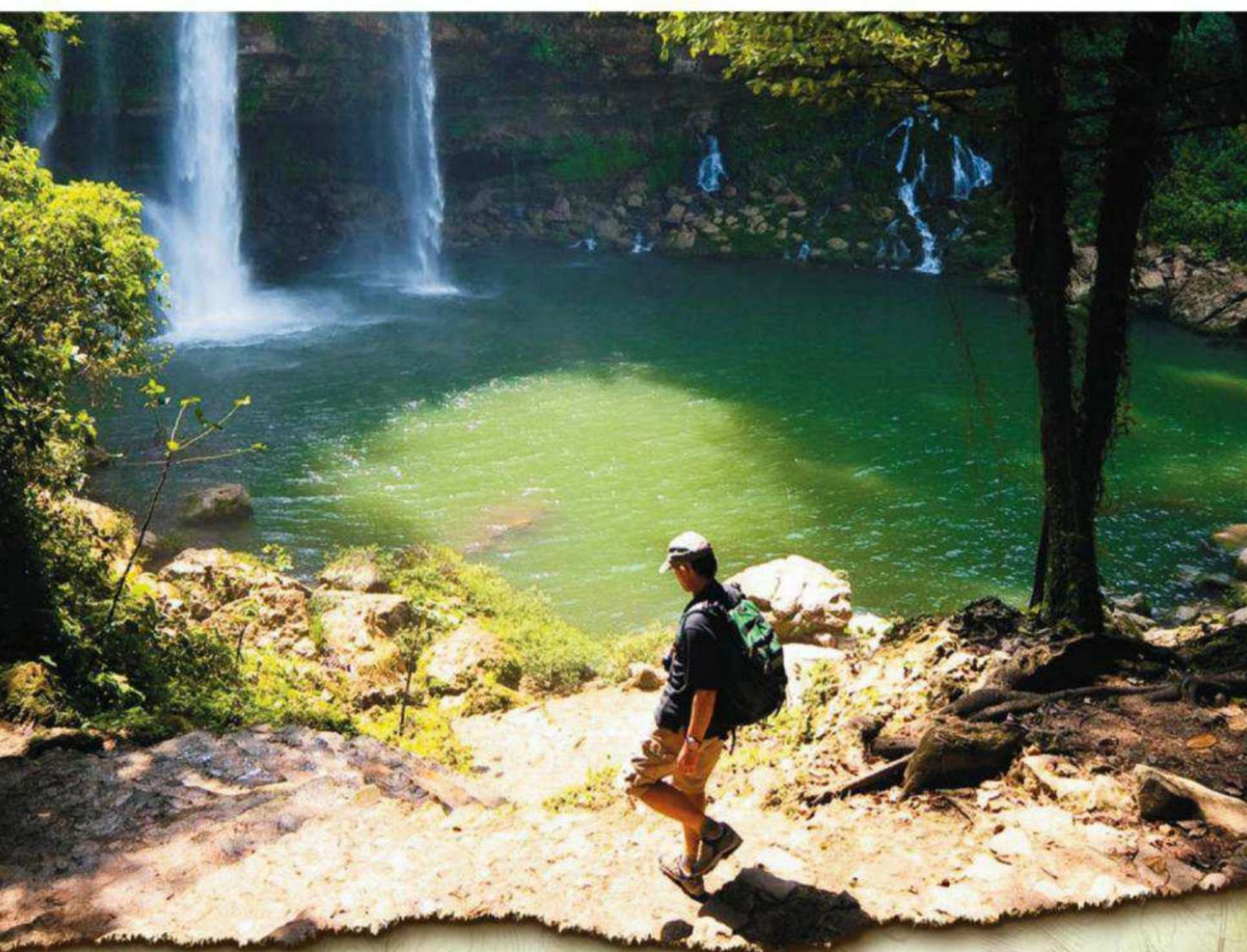


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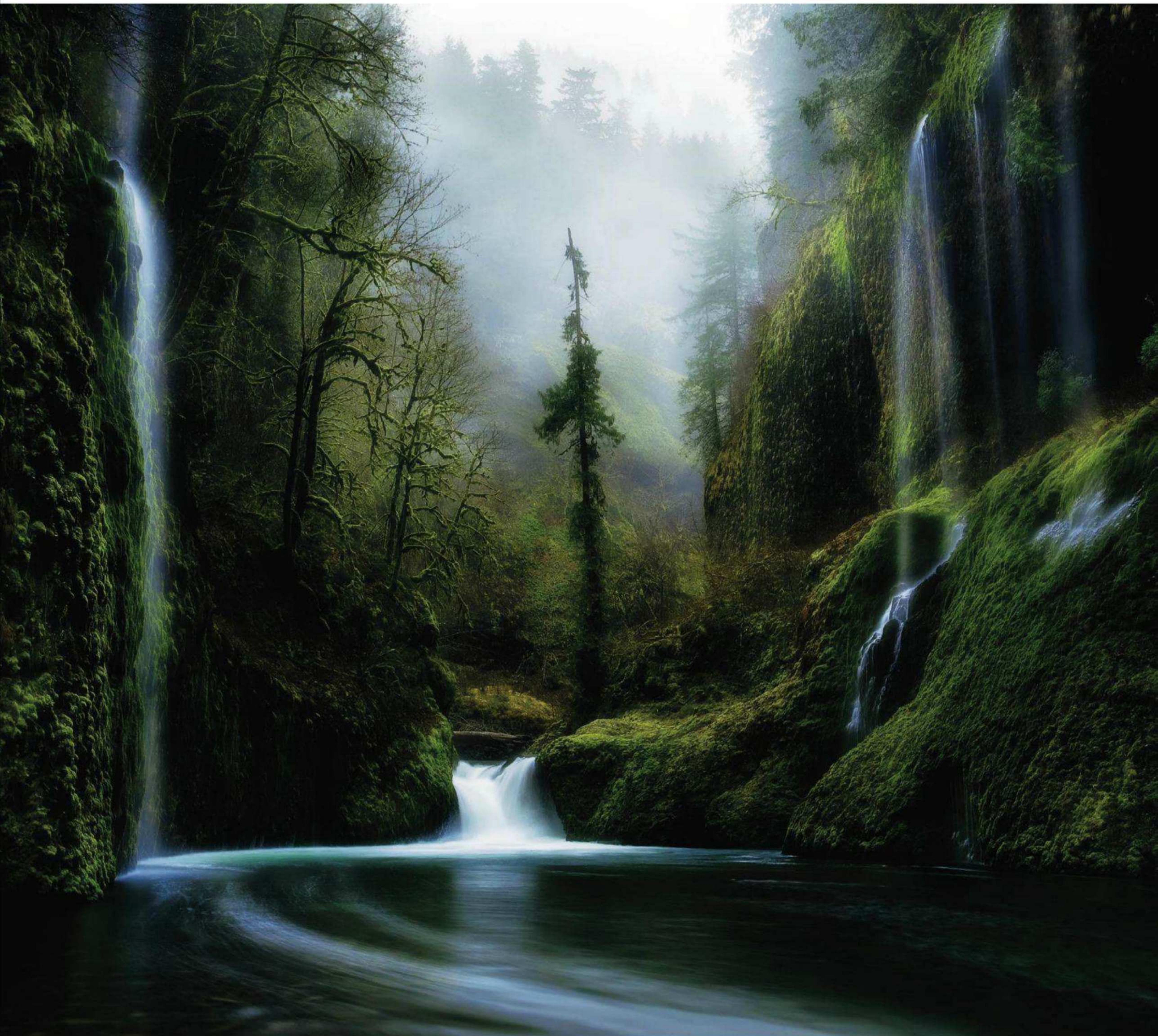
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Waterpark: Morning fog hangs thick at a clearing in the Eagle Creek Wilderness in the Columbia River Gorge.

ESCAPE

Live Streaming WHEN CATAclysmic Ice Age floods scooped out the Columbia River Gorge, its feeder streams were left hanging high, creating one of North America's greatest collection of waterfalls: cascades, cataracts, chutes, fans, streaming horse-tails, plunges, and punch bowls. The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area invites reverie as you hike among, or in some cases, behind, these spectral plumes. The Gorge itself—an 80-mile-long, up to 4,000-foot-deep chasm separating Oregon from Washington—provides the only natural passageway through the Cascade Mountains. Native Americans, explorers, and pioneers roamed through it and left behind inscrutable petroglyphs, rollicking riverside towns, and a sense of high adventure. To see the gorge as they did, forsake I-84 for the Historic Columbia River Highway, which begins at Troutdale, 16 miles east of Portland. Handcrafted in part by Italian stonemasons in the early 20th century, this serpentine road links the major waterfalls. Pick up some Columbia River smoked salmon and a bottle of the local Riesling (this is America's Rhineland, after all), and seek the nearest trailhead. —*Charles Kulander*

MILES MORGAN

québec



The Fortifications of Québec City
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Photography by Silk Studio.

1 (Left to right, standing) Sustainable Standard-Setters Lyn Santos, Ecology Manager, Fairmont Mayakoba; Beatriz Fuentes, Senior Marketing and Public Relations Manager, Fairmont Mayakoba; Maximilian Lennkh, Vice President and Area General Manager, Banyan Tree Mayakoba; Andrés Pan de Soraluce, President, OHL Developments; Ronald Sanabria, Sustainable Tourism Vice President, Rainforest Alliance; and Karin Salinas, Sales and Marketing Director, Rosewood Mayakoba. (Left to right, seated) Paola Rubio, CSR Manager, Banyan Tree Mayakoba; Damaris Chaves, Sustainable Tourism Project Director, Rainforest Alliance; and Cristina Leo, Master Plan Manager and Environmental Responsibility, Mayakoba Project. **2** (Left to right) Sigourney Weaver, actress; Daniel R. Katz, Founder and Board Chair, Rainforest Alliance; and Tensie Whelan, President, Rainforest Alliance. **3** Martha Stewart, Founder, Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia; Eric Poncon, Sustainable Standard-Setter. **4** Milstein Hall of Ocean Life, American Museum of Natural History.

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Photos courtesy (left to right): Aventuras de Sarapiquí; Adam Gibbon; David Dudenhoefer; Charlie Watson.

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Slip past the initial reserve of this proud Italian metropolis and you find a city with a passionate heart.

By Tom Mueller Photographs by Dave Yoder



Milano, **Ti Amo**



I am eating escargots and crostini with my father-in-law outside Peck, his favorite Milan deli. We're lunching standing up in a most un-Italian way, out of aluminum takeaway boxes. Our companions include immaculately tailored dealmakers and leggy valkyries straight off the catwalks. ¶ My Milan-born father-in-law is on home turf, but I feel out of place in this northern Italian city. Before moving here, I lived in Rome and the hills of Tuscany, where I became accustomed to rosemary-scented breezes, rain-smoothed porphyry, poetic gestures frozen in fresco, stone buildings awisper with voices of the past. ¶ Milan, in contrast, feels like a migraine. The bustle and ostentation, the absence of tangible history so complete that it often appears a rejection of that history—Milan stands for everything that Italy, in my mind, is not. Even this deli, one of Europe's most sumptuous, was founded by an immigrant from Prague.



"Truth is," I tell my father-in-law, "the day I moved to Milan I left the Mediterranean and entered Mitteleuropa."

"Time you got a better grasp of Italy," he snorts, spearing himself another snail. "We *Milanesi* don't worship our history like they do in Florence or Rome or Venice. What fascinates us is the future, which is why you'll find us constantly modifying and reinventing our past." Take Peck's facade in front of us, he continues. The addition of modern architectural touches to original art nouveau details has brought it to a new level, creating an intriguing blend of tradition and trendy. "For Italians who grew up in static, museum-like parts of the country," he says, "Milan's different dialogue with the past can be addictive. People come here for a creative freedom they don't find elsewhere. Milan is the real Italy. Anything is possible here!"

My shock must be showing because he flashes a satisfied smile. Yet as I process what he just said, I know intuitively he's right: I've been so busy looking for what is "Italian" in Milan that I've missed the living, breathing city. Blinded by Milan's in-your-face energy, buffaloes by its high-gloss haute couture and avant-garde design, I've been missing out on its humanity, its can-do optimism, its devotion to the craft of living. And if I've misinterpreted these, I also may have misread my Milanese father-in-law—and his daughter. My wife. *Mamma mia*. Getting to know this other Milan has taken on an unexpected urgency.

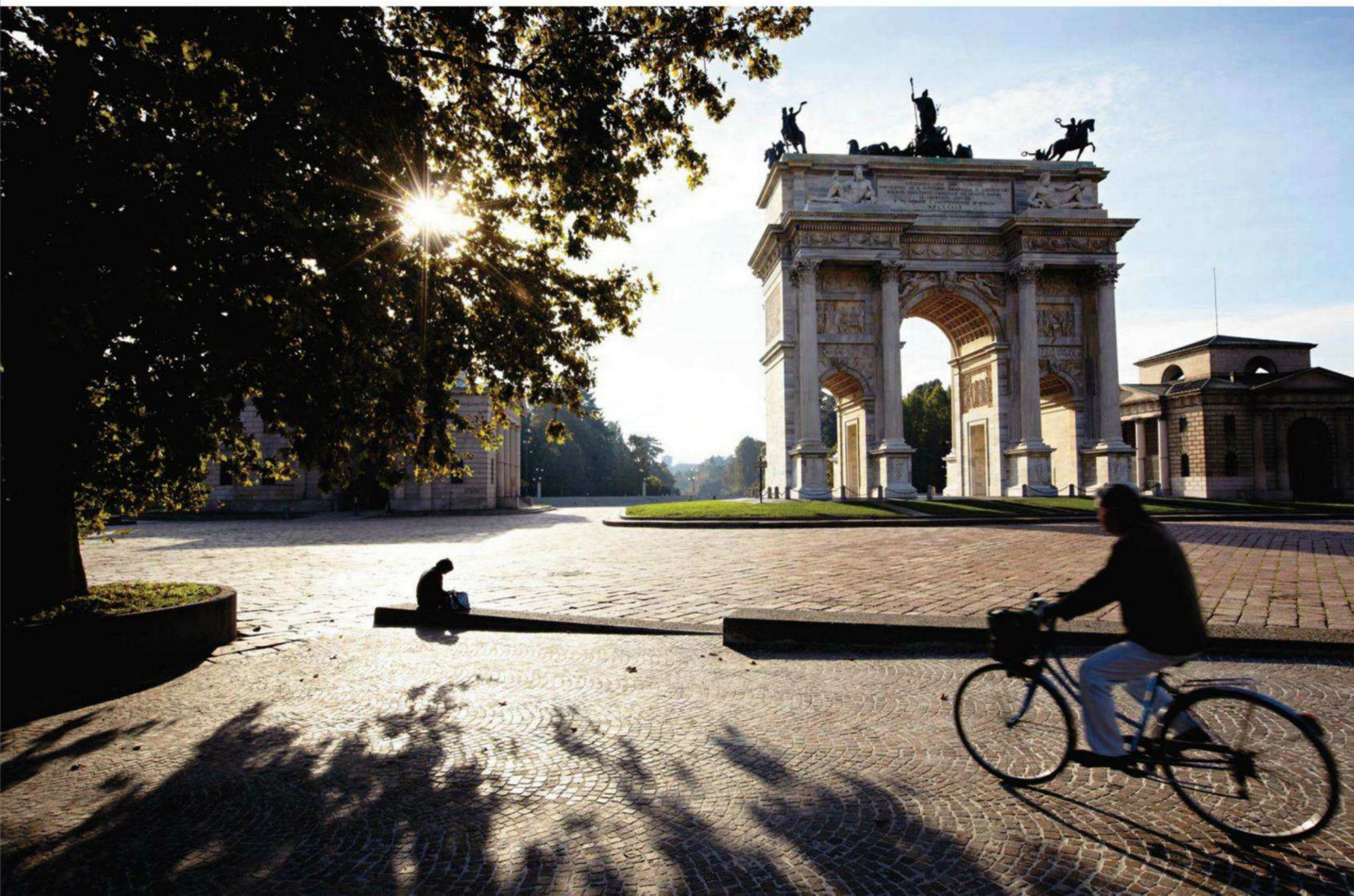
The natural starting point—what could be called Milan's heart—happens to sit just up the street: the city's arresting white-marble Duomo, from which downtown streets shoot off in all directions like the sun's rays. Five hundred years in the making and one of the largest Gothic cathedrals in the world (Mark Twain pronounced it "a delusion of frostwork that might vanish with a breath"), it invariably inspires "ooohs" from first-timers. For someone like me, partial to the smooth Renaissance domes I came to love in Rome and Florence, the sharp-gabled facade and soaring vaulted interior colored with stained glass, though impressive, come across as stern. Instead, I'm drawn to the frostwork's summit, where, Twain observed, "rank on rank of carved and fretted spires spring high in the air, and through their rich tracery one sees the sky beyond."

Spiraling up the narrow stairs to the roof terrace, I emerge among an attentive crowd of statues perching atop the cathedral's spires, each the creation of a local artist funded by one of the city's guilds, among them cobblers, bakers, and cartwrights. Viewed from the street their features were indistinguishable, but here, eye to eye with each saint and celebrated figure, I see joy, determination, fear. Even the gilt Madonnina ("beloved Madonna") crowning the cathedral's highest spire, so glittering and distant from ground level, wears, I now note, a slender smile. And no wonder. The

rush-hour frenzy of the streets below fades up here, leaving a peaceful landscape of red-tile roofs punctuated by antique terra-cotta chimneys. Beyond rises the snow-blanketed wall of the Alps, as crisp and near and unexpected as a fairy tale—a reminder that Milan's wealth came in part from controlling the mountain passes that linked the city's trade and traffic with the lands to the north.

A few minutes later I'm wearing the same slender smile of the Madonnina as I stroll Via Gesù in the heart of Milan's "golden quadrangle," ground

Simple is beautiful at the wine bar Cantine Isola (left), where plates of antipasti accompany sips of wine—and weekly recitations of poetry (opposite, upper). Morning sun awakens quiet Piazza Sempione (opposite, lower) and the 19th-century Arch of Peace, a gateway to Milan's beloved 116-acre Sempione Park. Opening pages: Love is in the air around Milan's landmark cathedral, or Duomo.





“We *Milanesi* don’t worship our history like they do in Rome or Florence or Venice. What fascinates us is the future.”



zero for haute-couture ateliers. The high-octane window dressing of the big-name boutiques—ArmaniPradaGucciVersace—clamor for my attention, but I’m looking for the human face behind the makeup. The simple awning of Atelier Brioni catches my eye precisely because it’s so un-eye-catching. Through the window I make out a tailor measuring and cutting and sewing—wearing a three-piece suit. No ordinary haberdashery here: Brioni dressed actors Pierce Brosnan and Daniel Craig for the James Bond films. Surely the tailor will know how to give my travel-worn sport jacket a *pizzico* of Milanese style.

When I enter, Antonio Laratta sizes me up with the straightforward familiarity of a great tailor. He strokes my chest with the back of his hand, then runs two fingers down my spine. “Nice work,” he says delicately, not wishing to offend, “though the left shoulder is a bit low, and there’s a *cannolo*, a little roll of cloth, in the back hem.” He suggests some adroit fixes, including a lining of horsehair fabric that will give the jacket a sleek new aerodynamicism, then lifts it off me and sets to work.

Above: Design high priestess Rossana Orlandi arranges wares in her shop cum gallery, Spazio. **Above, left:** Doggone handsome, fashion-forward terrier Rocco models the latest in hound wear. **Opposite:** Bristling with spires, statues, and rainspouts, Milan’s showy Duomo presides over its own piazza.

Carefully snipping and stitching, Laratta relates how he started tailoring as a boy in his native Calabria, a region in Italy’s deep south. “When I felt ready for the big time, I prepared my very best work as audition pieces and came north to Milan to show the world what I could do.” Which has been plenty: Before landing at Brioni he worked at another boutique Italian fashion house. Now he kits out heads

of state; he is just back from fitting one nation’s president for thousands of dollars in new customized suits.

His are two of the hidden hands behind the glitter of Milan’s runways, master crafters who steer the ship of high fashion with time-honored, time-consuming, and increasingly rare skill.

Back on the street, I’m thinking about fabrics and the origins of *buon gusto*—good taste—when I pass the Galleria Moshe Tabibnia, an oriental-rug showroom a few blocks to the west, on Via Brera.





From sacred to social:
Well-heeled revelers
mingle in the *alta moda*
Gattopardo Café—right
where parishioners once
worshipped in what was
the Church of St. Joseph.



The window dressing of the boutiques—ArmaniPradaGucciVersace—clamor for my attention, but I’m looking for the human face behind the makeup.

Actually, calling this modern space a showroom is like calling the *QE2* a boat. Under low, theatrical lights, the rich colors of the ancient textiles almost seem to perfume the air. The gallery’s founder, Moshe Tabibnia, wanders over. Chiseled features and searching dark eyes give him an intensity consonant with his reputation as a top authority on oriental rugs. Like Laratta, Tabibnia came to Milan from another land, in his case Iran, but has called the city home for a quarter century. “My whole world is here,” he says gesturing with both arms, as if to embrace the nearby Teatro alla Scala and Duomo. “Milan is the best place on Earth to do what I do.”

Why, I ask Tabibnia, would a citizen of the world like him set up shop here rather than London, Paris, Istanbul?

“Milan has been the heart of the oriental-rug market since the Renaissance,” he answers, “when the Viscontis and the Sforzas, cultured warlords who ruled the city, imported vast quantities of Eastern rugs, tapestries, and silks to adorn their palaces, their chapels—and their bodies.”

To appreciate the influence these fabrics exerted on the Renaissance imagination, Tabibnia suggests I visit Milan’s renowned art museum, the Pinacoteca di Brera, where Madonnas by Quattrocento painters are frequently draped in oriental tapestries. But I’m finding it difficult to envisage a more intimate experience than Galleria Tabibnia. Here I not only get to peruse; I can touch the fabrics without getting my knuckles rapped. So I do: prayer rugs crafted in ancient Persia, tribal Berber carpets, ceremonial wraps for babies woven in remote Caucasus valleys—scores of precious fabrics gathered from around the world.

Tabibnia has collected so many, in fact, that he’ll soon open the Museum of Antique Textile Arts in Milan (MATAM) to display what is now one of the world’s largest collections of antique textiles, paid for out of his own pocket. “I’m giving back to the world of oriental rugs some of what it has given me over the years,” he says with a shrug. Generosity, it seems, is an unsung Milanese trait.

THAT, I NOW SEE, is what I’m after: The unsung Milan. And what better way to poke around for it than on a Vespa, the iconic Italian motorbike that was conceived in the nearby town of Biella? I rent one at the Stazione Centrale (central train station) and head out eager for revelations.

It doesn’t take long. I make a Vespa beeline to the southern Navigli district, named for the *navigli* (canals) built between the 12th and 19th centuries to aid the movement of goods to and from the growing merchant city. Sections of this canal network web the city, though parts were covered in the 1930s after speedier cargo transport came along. Big barges once glided along the waterways, eased by an innovative system of locks designed by none other than Leonardo da Vinci.

One of the larger canals still flows under open skies in Navigli, a world of water music and tremulous water light.

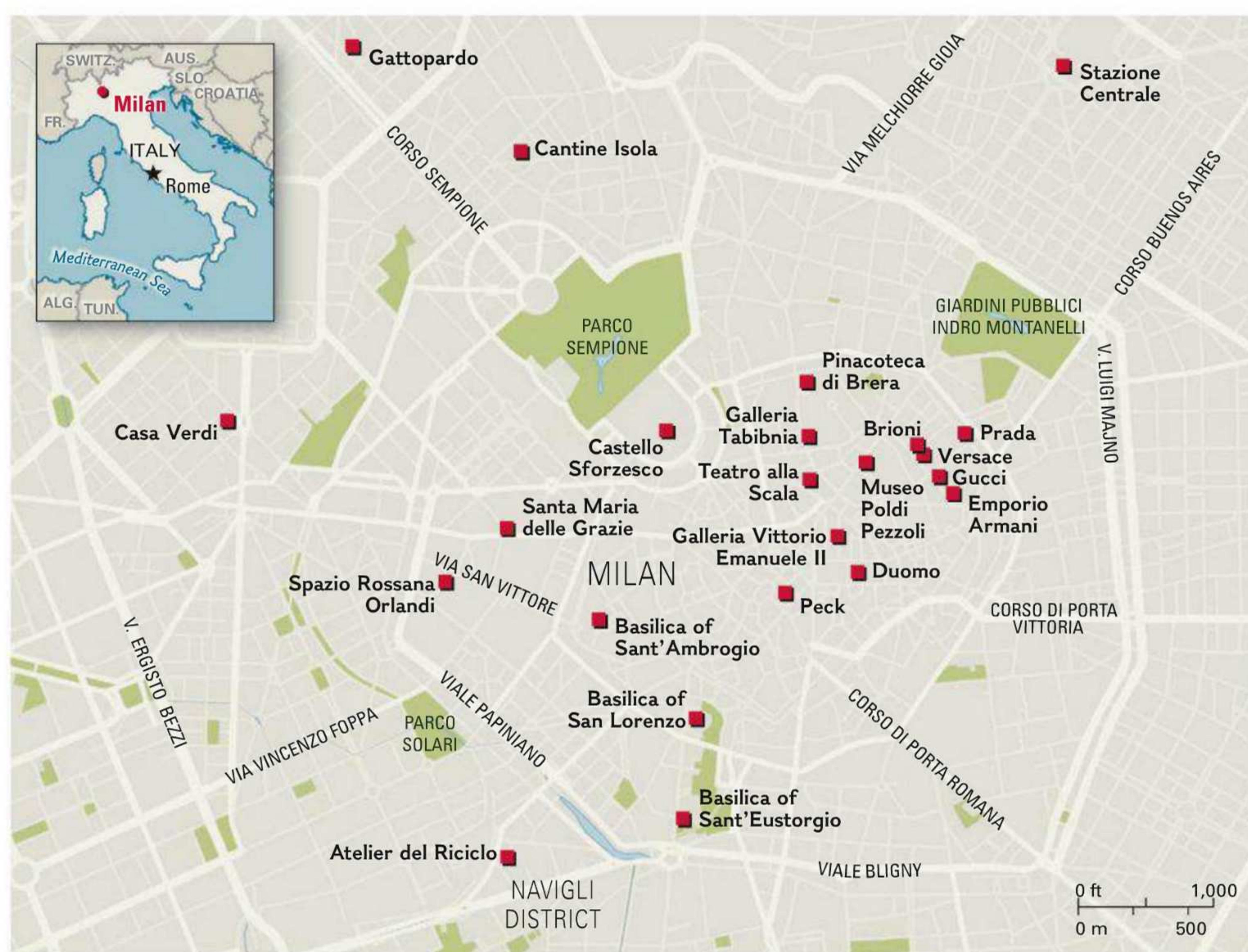
When I arrive, wisps of fog are sneaking in from the countryside, veiling canalside cafés and shops in mist, including Atelier del Riciclo, which specializes in the “creative reuse of objects that apparently outlived their function.” Clothing, furniture, accessories, all made with recycled materials, decorate the white-walled space. Nearby, other low-gloss artisanal shops have taken hold, counterpoints to downtown’s trend-propelled design houses.

Counterpoints to modern trends lie hidden in plain sight all over Milan and include three heavy hitters: the early Christian basilicas of Sant’Ambrogio, Sant’Eustorgio, and San Lorenzo. I scooter north toward the rough crescent they form along the city’s western side. These ancient structures hewing to the eternal shun the come-hither displays of contemporary life; as at Brioni, their showpieces are interior ones. I sift through vast stores of sacred bric-a-brac for nuggets of holiness: Sant’Eustorgio’s fresco-clad Portinari Chapel, a pearl of the Lombard Renaissance, and the Three Magi altar that is said to contain bits of those three wise men; Sant’Ambrogio’s ethereal inner cloister, in which monks chant to this day; San Lorenzo’s Chapel of Saint Aquilino, with its Roman mosaic (and nearby Roman colonnade).

Then there’s the gorgeous church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, with its elegantly layered stucco-and-brick apse, a quintessence of Renaissance restraint attributed to the great 15th-century architect Donato Bramante. The hidden trophy here? One of the world’s meta-paintings: Leonardo da Vinci’s “Last Supper,” celebrated

for its pioneering sense of perspective and the way it captures each disciple’s reaction as Christ announces that one of them will betray him. You would think a masterpiece of this caliber would enjoy a prominent position. Not here: The artwork remains on the wall for which it was commissioned, in the

Still fashionable after all these years, Milan’s glass-ceilinged Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II (opposite) opened in 1878 as one of the world’s first enclosed shopping spaces, heralding a trend that would be copied around the globe.



Italy's greatest living sculptor, Arnaldo Pomodoro, hangs his hat—and parks some of his best bronzes—in a former foundry.



adjacent convent's otherwise unremarkable refectory.

A modest setting also distinguishes the gem of an art collection I'm off to next, the Museo Poldi Pezzoli. I feel like a houseguest when I enter the residence of Milanese nobleman Gian Giacomo Poldi Pezzoli, near La Scala; though Gian Giacomo died in 1879, his welcome is as warm as ever. This sharp-eyed aesthete dedicated his life (and a chunk of his family fortune) to surrounding himself with Greek vases, Etruscan goldwork, Flemish tapestries, and antique weaponry, not to mention masterworks by Botticelli, Piero della Francesca, and others. I'm pulled as if magnetically to Milan's loveliest Madonna, wearing the slender smile of the Duomo's Madonnina, painted by 15th-century master Andrea Mantegna.

Intimate little house museums like this are another unsung side of Milan, reflecting how money earned in trade was deployed into the arts. In collections gathered by such notable families as Bagatti Valsecchi and Boschi Di Stefano, the proud ghosts of former owners seem to take you by the arm to show you around their homes, now and then whispering a bit of choice gossip in your ear.

This certainly is my experience in Casa Verdi, on Milan's west

Roadside dining is the real deal aboard ATMosfera, a couple of repurposed streetcars that offer tours of Milan paired with classic Milanese cuisine served in a vintage 1920s setting.

side, where a small museum lovingly displays belongings and instruments owned by the 19th-century composing great Giuseppe Verdi. As I face the maestro's portrait, returning his piercing gaze while a sound track of his leading arias plays in my head, a

voice speaks behind me. "*Come sei bello!* How handsome you are!"

Turning, I find a trim woman in leggings watching me impishly. "I'm over 80, so I get to say what I like," she says, enjoying my befuddlement. Then she pirouettes and glides from the room.

A gentleman in tweeds and a goatee who witnessed the moment chuckles at my wonderment. "The arts keep us young," former star tenor Paolo Cesare Ottaviani confides, his eyes twinkling. My admirer, he adds, was once the prima ballerina at La Scala. He takes my arm and leads me into Casa Verdi, which, in addition to the museum, houses one of the world's most progressive and inspiring retirement communities. Passing through rooms resplendent with mosaics and boiserie, I spot residents painting

and a former concert pianist teaching a young student a Chopin Nocturne. “This place is a lot like metaphysical theater,” Ottaviani notes.

HE’S TALKING ABOUT CASA VERDI, but his words fit Milan, too. As I’ve traveled deeper into this city, I’ve found metaphysical theater on a grand scale, with a citizenry that has modulated and syncopated its past like a Paganini violin cadenza. Take the abandoned steel mill remodeled by the La Scala theater into rehearsal space: The cavernous halls now ring with Verdi’s “Anvil Chorus” and overflow with stage sets. Italy’s greatest living sculptor, Arnaldo Pomodoro, hangs his hat—and parks some of his best bronzes—in a former foundry that made turbines for Niagara Falls. Lady Gaga megahits pulse in a deconsecrated church reincarnated as the Gattopardo club. Other entrepreneurs have forsaken real estate entirely and taken to the road, like the armada of clothing designers who make fashion house calls in three-wheeled vehicles outfitted as mobile boutiques—a quintessential blend of Milanese restlessness and resourcefulness.

My favorite remake? A tie factory near Santa Maria delle Grazie that design diva Rossana Orlandi transformed into a hub of avant-garde good taste, part boutique, part gallery, part art colony, with a swish restaurant thrown in for good measure. If Milan were a woman, it would be like Orlandi—classy, gracious, with a sharp business sense and a gift for grand statements. “Fashion is dead, but design is very much alive,” she declares, elegant in Jackie O shades and metal cuffs that Cleopatra, I just know, would have coveted. “Great design is about mixing styles from different places, collecting experiences and emotions—something we Milanese excel at.”

When I ask if the spirit of her space is the essence of Milan, she

answers, “No, this is Rossana!” Then she smiles her radiant smile. “But without Milan’s openness and eclecticism, this place probably wouldn’t have happened.” She leads me through her realm, pausing to rest a long-fingered hand on objects she gathered from around the world. Some are notable: I spot a Julian Mayor chair and Sebastian Wrong lamps. Others are by up-and-comers she has discovered. “I fall in love with my kids. They’re my vitamins!”

One of her “kids” is Dublin-born Nuala Goodman, who moved to Milan in the 1980s to work with the legendary founder of the Memphis Group, Ettore Sottsass. We meet in her atelier near the Navigli. For her, Milan’s beauty is everywhere. “The Milanese have a highly developed visual sense. Design permeates everyday life here more than in any city I know. Where else can you enter a bar and immediately admire the cups, the spoons, the mirror?”

IT’S MY NEW MILAN—theatrical, visual—that I experience that evening on ATMosfera, a 1920s streetcar converted into a rolling restaurant. “Welcome aboard our version of the *Orient Express*,” says the driver. Sure enough, the carriage is deliciously retro: brocade tablecloths, blousy drapes, vintage porcelains. With the ring of a bell, a handful of other diners and I glide into the night.

We roll by the Duomo, where I salute the Madonnina, and past the candlelit Basilica of Sant’Eustorgio. San Lorenzo’s Roman colonnade glows pale as bone in the moonlight. As we coast along, for a moment I feel Milan itself is moving, gliding by us with the grace of a prima ballerina. Finally I am seeing it face-to-face.

TOM MUELLER’s book *Extra Virginity*, a social, cultural, and criminal history of olive oil, will be published in December 2011. Milan-based photographer DAVE YODER shot Istanbul for our October 2010 issue.

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Last Goodbye in Chiang Mai

**A SON JOURNEYS TO THE SPICY
LAND HIS FATHER CHOSE AS
A FINAL HOME.**





Palm trees and red earth greet a haze-free sky as the overnight train from Bangkok slows and clanks into Chiang Mai station. I've long wanted to explore Chiang Mai, Thailand's cultural epicenter, with its elephants and temples and hill tribes. But there's another reason I've come half-way around the world, and there he is, standing on the platform: my father. ¶ We hug, and that familiar smell of my whole life wraps around me, both comforting and disorienting way out here in this loud, hot, foreign city. ¶ My father is 81.

Four years ago he slung on a backpack, headed to Asia, and met a Thai woman named Nachanok Wichitrattanathada—Nanni—on a bus traveling in Laos. They hit it off, and now he and Nanni operate and live above Chitlada, a simple little soup joint on the outskirts of Chiang Mai, where Nanni is from. My father is an old-school traveler and guide: I remember how every visitor to my childhood home in Washington, D.C., was driven around to see the monuments and marched through George Washington's Mount Vernon while he rattled off history.

Chiang Mai is a long way from Mount Vernon, even farther from his Orthodox Jewish upbringing. Which had me wondering: How in the world did he end up hawking soup in Thailand? I've come to check out this exotic land my father has chosen to live in. The irrepressible old tour guide in him will likely have lots of

suggestions of places to visit in his beloved Chiang Mai, but I plan to explore the neighboring hill country with its remote tribal villages as well. Perhaps I'll get to know my father a little better.

Outside the train station, we slide into Nanni's pickup truck, its ceiling liner carrying Buddhist good luck prayers written in Sanskrit. Nanni has short black hair, a serene face, and eyes that sparkle. My father points out the city's old walls and canals. We drop my bags off at the restaurant, which has three simple wooden tables inside and six on a covered veranda surrounded by a wall of potted plants. Blown-up photos of Nanni kneeling before the King and Queen of Thailand ("This is the time I cooked for the King; I cook delicious, true!") hang on the walls.

Nanni's friend Ping joins us—she lives next door—and soon we're hurtling through the countryside, Nanni driving like Danica



Carefree boys leap from Chiang Mai's old city walls into a cooling moat. Also free to roam, a resident of the Elephant Nature Park (opposite) comes close enough to visitors to touch and feed. Opening pages: Two girls walk between rice paddies in a Padaung village near Chiang Mai, where ties to family and the land run deep.

“We were at the market the other day and it reminded me of visiting the Jewish ghetto in New York with my grandparents—how noisy and crowded it was but also how warm and dynamic.”

Patrick at Indy. We swing past fields of corn and banana, rice and taro, and climb into low green hills dotted with brilliant dabs of red peacock flower. We cross a bridge.

“I was born here,” Nanni says. “My grandfather had a ferryboat, and when they built the bridge, he had to find a new business.” The family started cooking.

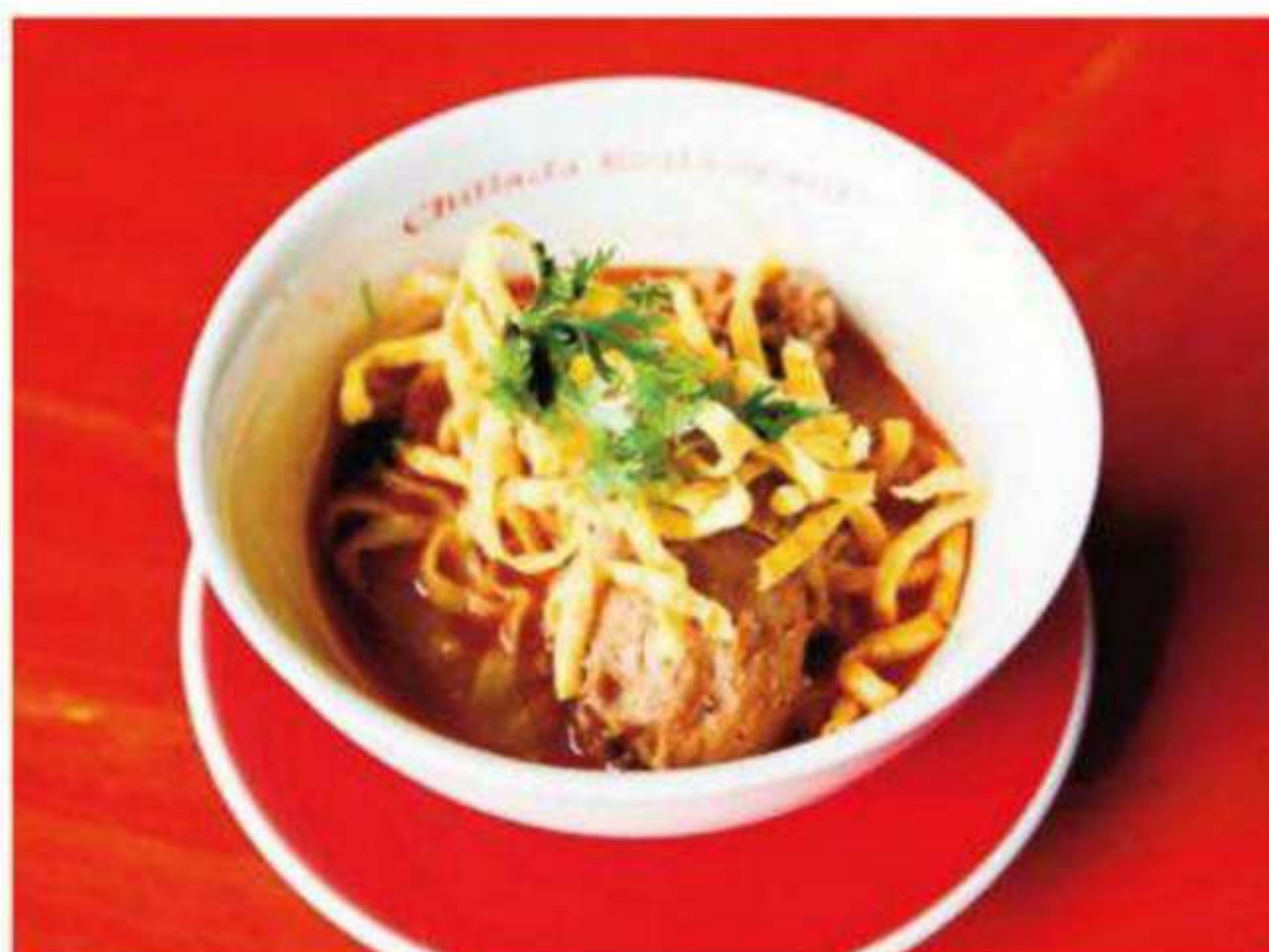
“They have woks big enough to put two people in,” my father says.

“You hungry?” Nanni says to me.

“He’s always hungry,” my father says.

It’s true. We’re both opportunistic omnivores. We’re not particular or squeamish—food is to be explored the same as books, cultures, or art. I can recall sitting around my grandparents’ table during summer visits, a gang of relatives sucking the marrow out of bones. My grandparents were Orthodox Jews and kosher; my father declared atheism at 17, when he also lied about his age and joined the Army. He later had a long career at the nexus of newspapers and politics in Washington, and he eats everything and anything, especially if it’s got chili peppers.

So does Nanni. So do all Thais, it seems—they love to eat and they love to cook—and soon enough we’re sitting around a long wooden table on a restaurant veranda overlooking a lake. Under



overhanging eaves we eat. And eat. Fish and fish heads and tom yum soup and mushrooms. It’s all thick with chili, garlic, basil, and peppers that sizzle and pop with flavor and heat. The tails and heads pile up, and my father says, “What could be better than this?”

When nothing but scales and bones remain, we drive through the rustic countryside, passing old teak houses on stilts, conical hay bales, and rice paddies.

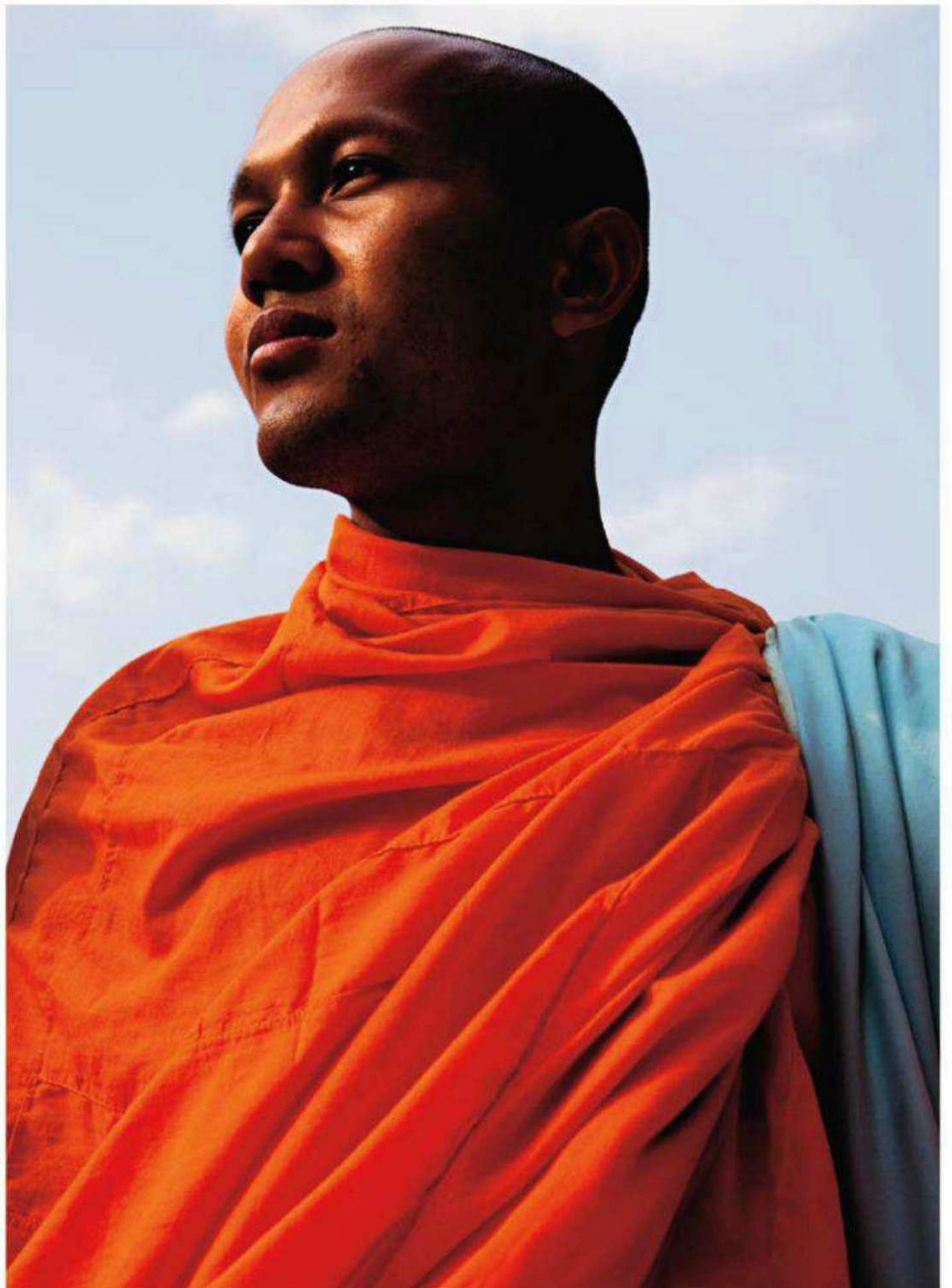
My father tells me he’s reading Joseph Conrad’s *An Outcast of the Islands*, and it hits me how much books and writing have fueled our shared wanderlust. “I can still remember, as a boy, reading Richard Halliburton’s descriptions of dinosaur eggs in the Gobi,” he says. “And here I walk into a hotel or a shop, and it’s like I’m in a novel by Maugham or Greene.” A curious boy reads about deserts and dinosaurs and Eastern intrigue, and the man wants to go find them.

“We were at the market the other day,” he says, “and it reminded me of visiting the Jewish ghetto in New York with my grandparents—how noisy and crowded it was but also how warm and dynamic. Whole families have stalls, and of course that’s what my grandparents had, a vegetable stall that became a market.” My father, I realize, as we zoom through rural Thailand, has traveled





Paper parasols come in eye-popping colors at a factory outside Chiang Mai. *Opposite:* The city's nighttime food market (*lower*) provides the ingredients for peppery local fare, such as the *khao soi* soup at Chitlada (*upper*).



My father loves the exotic and the romantic. Add his love of spicy food—and, well, Chiang Mai seems like the little golf hole he's been hurtling toward all his life.

so far from the crowded Jewish neighborhood of his early youth that he's come full circle to an Asia that reminds him of it.

ROOSTERS WAKE ME in the darkness the next morning. My father and I eat eggs scrambled with little red peppers that scratch my tongue with fire, and drink our coffee against the backdrop sounds of scooters and motorcycles and Thai voices. I press him about ending up in Chiang Mai. "Well," he says, "Nanni is here, and she takes care of me." He sips his coffee and ponders. "Thais are so much nicer, easier, than Westerners, and I like to walk and to find out how people are." But his days of strolling are limited now—he's three-quarters blind after a stroke and battling lung cancer that leaves him wheezing after walking a few hundred feet.

Breakfast finished, I borrow Nanni's motorbike and rattle and roar into downtown Chiang Mai. Unlike Bangkok, with its huge shiny malls stocked with Maserati dealerships and Starbucks, Chiang Mai retains a provincial feel, its walled old center woven with quiet, narrow lanes.

I duck into a one-story building offering traditional Thai massages by blind masseuses, and while being pummeled and poked by an eyeless woman with hands like orchid petals and steel rebar, I ponder how much my father loves the exotic and the romantic. Add his relentless curiosity and fearlessness, his refusal to fit in like everyone else, and his love of spicy food—well, Chiang Mai seems like the little golf hole he's been hurtling toward all his life.

We're not very different. As a child I was spellbound by tales of the "primitive" in the Amazon and Arabia and Borneo, and now I have my eyes on the hill tribes that live in the tangled green mountains stretching to the north of Chiang Mai, along the border with Myanmar (Burma). Descendants of nomadic wanderers from Tibet, China, and Laos, the Lisu, Lahu, Akha, Hmong, Karen, and Mien tribes are known for their rich textiles and metalwork—and a political limbo that preserves their culture even as it keeps them poor. When my hour-long, five-dollar massage is over, my cell phone rings: A friend in Bangkok has connected me to Eak, a guide who says he can take me to places few tourists go.

Eak is 34, short and sturdy, and, born near the border, able to speak a couple of hill tribe dialects. He picks me up at the restaurant in the morning, and we head north. I realize my father never asked me why I was going; he just knew.

"If you stay along the border at night," Eak says, "you can hear dogs braying like donkeys, and the Burmese tribes come across the border with opium." Borders have always fascinated me, and this one more than most; one side is an anachronistic military dictatorship presiding over a forbidden world, the other a dynamic, fast-rising nation.

The road ascends to long leaf pines and plunges to river valleys and bamboo houses. This is Lisu country, Eak says, and the sons are named "son number one, son number two, son number three. A boy will say, 'I am son number three and my father is son number four.'" It sounds apocryphal, but I savor the idea.

The road becomes one lane, dirt, and dives into the jungle. We ford a river and after 20 minutes bump into a beaten red earth clearing of perhaps 20 bamboo houses on stilts: the Lahu village of Houy Yha Sai.

The Lahu originally hailed from Tibet, animistic hunters of wild boar and barking deer. These days, the Lahu farm more than hunt. Eak is known here. We climb a bobbing ladder of six rungs into a bamboo house. A man lies in a corner, head and shoulders on a pillow, smoking opium out of a pipe fashioned from a Coca-Cola can. Children crowd inside to stare at us, as does a graceful old woman in a blue T-shirt and orange sarong. Her still black hair is in a bun. Her short fingers clutch a cigarette rolled in a corn husk. Her name is Na Jae. "I was born in Burma," she says, as Eak translates, "but my parents decided to come to Thailand 15 years ago. We walked for ten days and slept in the forest."

Encounters like these are always awkward at first; imagine someone from Thailand just waltzing into your home one afternoon. Patient surrender is the key. I smile; I smoke a cigarette even though I don't smoke. I let the children look at the camera. We pass around photos of my three children. Everyone relaxes.

Sure enough, Na Jae invites us for lunch at her house, which is a few doors over. A five-foot-square pile of freshly foraged ball mushrooms fills one corner, and they make the house smell like damp forest. Na Jae has six children and three grandchildren, she says, and introduces her husband, Jha Ha. Na Jae is the village shaman, it turns out, and a back room of her house is stocked with handmade bamboo vessels to hold the pure mountain water—"water for the gods," she says—and white cotton flags that symbolize "a bridge to heaven" when someone dies. She grasps a machete and a stalk of bamboo and in five minutes carves a flute, on which she plays a haunting, rough melody.

"This is a very old traditional tune," says Na Jae. "A woman plays this after her work is over to tell her lover to meet her in the fields."

Jha Ha takes the flute, plays something, and then laughs. "That's my picking-up song," he says. "It's my love song to her." Suddenly I realize this is no abstraction but the couple's song. "We worked



Clockwise from upper left: Faces of northern Thailand include Elephant Nature Park founder Sangduen Chailert; a woman of the Padaung tribe wearing the traditional brass rings that help elongate the neck, a mark of beauty; and a young monk at Wat Phra That Doi Suthep, which houses a replica of the Emerald Buddha statue in Bangkok's Wat Phra Kaeo.

“Buddhists are cremated when they die, but sometimes we find a small crystal left behind in the ashes, which is a sign they found enlightenment.”

in the fields together when we were children,” Na Jae says, “and then he would play that for me.”

Their grandchildren come and go, sidling up next to me, their small fingers touching my legs and shoulders. Na Jae starts singing in a thin, high voice. I’m happy to be tasting a life so different from my own, which is what my father has done with Nanni at Chitlada. After all, he’s the one who prepared me for this, handing me books when I was small, telling me not to worry when we drove through rough-looking neighborhoods, presenting the world as a place of wonder to be dived into, not feared. To take big mouthfuls of the world. To be an opportunistic omnivore.

Speaking of which, I follow Na Jae into the “kitchen”—a small, dark room with a dirt hearth, soot-covered pots, and glowing coals. She squats and fans the coals red hot, chops garlic and mushrooms and chilies, and throws them into a wok. Eak donates a can of sardines, which Jha Ha opens with a knife, and soon we kneel in a circle on the springy floor in deep shadows, eating. The mushrooms and chilies are earth and fire mixed with rice, and I’m thinking about staying forever when Eak taps my shoulder, taps his watch. Time to drag me out of the rabbit hole.

AN HOUR NORTH OF CHIANG MAI we turn into the valley leading to Sangduen “Lek” Chailert’s elephant preserve. Elephants and Thailand, especially northern Thailand, are inextricably linked, the animals symbols of power and fertility, as well as trained beasts of burden. But their natural habitat is shrinking, and logging was banned in 1989, leaving many animals unemployed and subject to abuse. There are a lot of elephant attractions around Chiang Mai, but Chailert’s is different. A tiny, charismatic ethnic Khamu, Chailert fell in love with the beasts as a little girl and started rescuing them from logging camps and street beggars. Through pluck and force of will, and with the help of international donors, she now operates a 200-acre preserve where 30 elephants are free to just wander and play. Unlike at other preserves, riding them is forbidden. Visitors can spend the day just watching them or a week or more volunteering.

I walk with Chailert, who’s wearing two long braids and knee-high Wellingtons, down to the river, where about ten elephants bathe and frolic in the mud. “I had a poor background,” she says, keeping a close eye on them, “and I didn’t know anything about animal rights, but in my heart I began to think I couldn’t turn my back on them.” Covered in mud now, the pachyderms amble by us close enough to touch, then rub themselves on the pylons of an observation deck. I hand them chunks of cucumbers and bamboo. They trumpet, snort, and caress each other. It seems remarkable that any living thing so big and powerful could be so gentle.

FOLLOWING MY FATHER’S URGING, I spend a day exploring some of Chiang Mai’s hundreds of temples, known as wats, with Berm, a friend of Eak’s. “My favorite,” my father says, “was built around the time of Columbus.”

The wats are oases of calm, containing pagodas and paintings of the Buddha’s path to enlightenment and monks in saffron robes. Each wat has a story. Wat Phra That Doi Suthep, for example, was established in 1383 by a wandering white elephant. The wat I like the most lies in the exact middle of the old city and is 600 years

old. The sprawling Wat Chedi Luang compound centers around a nearly 200-foot-tall pagoda, faced with stone elephants. Huge resin trees that Berm says are hundreds of years old flank its base.

In a side building, a display of dozens of small, glass, pagoda-shaped vials holding relics surround a life-size wax monk in cross-legged prayer. Each vial contains a few tiny quartz-like crystals. “Buddhists are cremated when they die,” Berm says, “but sometimes we find a small crystal left behind in the ashes, which is a sign they found enlightenment.” Each vial has a monk’s name.

In a corner, a young monk with a saffron robe and a shaved head sits at a table with a couple of benches. The Chedi Luang wat holds monk chats—a chance for monks and everyday folks, mostly tourists, to talk. “Lay people have a lot of problems,” says the young monk, Pena Met, “but in the temple we follow the middle way, with less problems.” His day, he says, is simple: up at five a.m. to pray and meditate; collect alms from people outside the temple at six; study and pray and meditate and sleep. “We don’t think about the future; it is day by day.” He is 25 and has been a monk for four years. He will probably leave the monastery after eight years of study. He admits that a monk’s life isn’t easy. “I have to struggle to control my mind, to fight not to worry.”

It turns out he’s got wanderlust. He wants to talk to tourists, to learn English, to read books written in English; he has even downloaded TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) lectures onto his computer to find out about other lands and other ways. Finally, he says it: “I really want to go to America!”

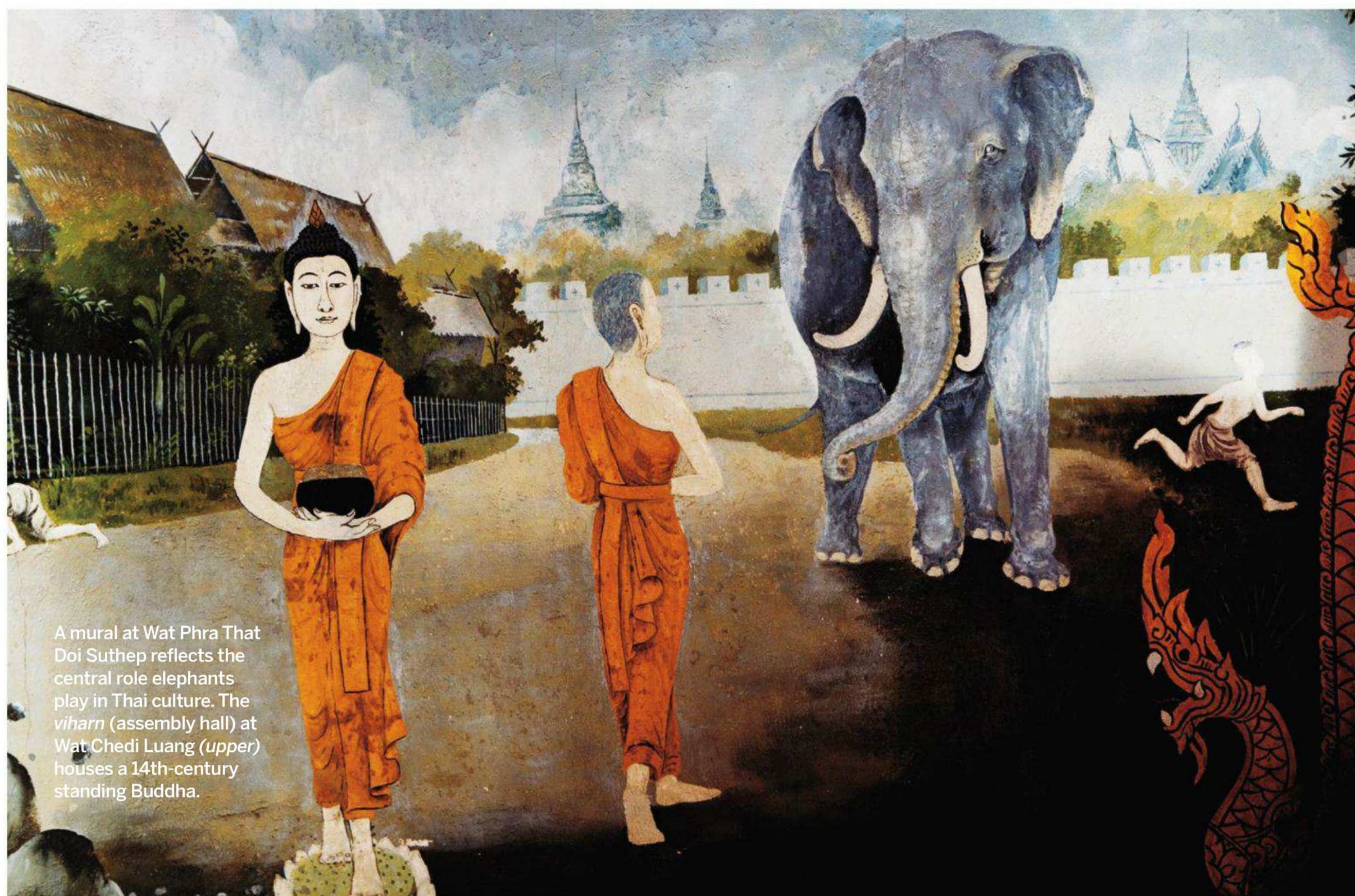
MY FATHER, BEING THE EATER that he is, likes to talk about Nanni’s soup, a thick, spicy northern Thai specialty called *khao soi*. One morning I wake early to help her prepare it, in a big wok on a one-burner stove in Chitlada’s little kitchen. Mix coconut milk with a thick red curry paste, stir and boil and stir for an hour, as it reduces and richens. She empties in chunks of beef. As the basic soup cooks, my father and I tuck into a bowl from the day before, with freshly squeezed limes and noodles and Nanni’s homemade chili paste.

Travel is all about stepping through gateways into other worlds, but usually just for a time. You drop in but climb out again. I’m about to leave Chiang Mai, go home. My father isn’t—he’s here on the ultimate travel journey, a one-way ticket. He’s here to stay, sucked in by the grace of Thailand’s green warmth, ubiquitous peppers, and a smiling Nanni.

“See all those plants?” he says, pointing to the verdant wall of green surrounding the veranda. “She and her relatives chopped them out of the forest!” He pauses. “Sometimes you just see an elephant walking down the street.”

He doesn’t have to say anything more. I know why he’s here; in a way, I knew it the minute I stepped off the train. Home is fine, but Chiang Mai is hot and smoky and filled with rich smells and tastes. It fills his imagination and gives him a sense of wonder each and every day.

CARL HOFFMAN’s father passed away in November, not long after this story was reported. Carl is the author of *The Lunatic Express: Discovering the World . . . Via Its Most Dangerous Buses, Boats, Trains, and Planes*. Photographer PALANI MOHAN lived in Thailand for six years.



A mural at Wat Phra That Doi Suthep reflects the central role elephants play in Thai culture. The *viharn* (assembly hall) at Wat Chedi Luang (*upper*) houses a 14th-century standing Buddha.

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STAR TREK

YOSEMITE TO THE MOON

An avid night hiker sets out to walk the entire John Muir Trail—after dark.

After midnight, the author traverses the Rae Lakes area of California's Kings Canyon National Park to the light of a just risen moon.

BY **James Vlahos** • PHOTOGRAPHS BY **Dmitri Alexander**



DUSK.

Lodgepole pines stand silhouetted against a darkening purple sky. The wind has died, and the forest is utterly still, as if time itself is

holding its breath, waiting for night and not yet certain it will come. A faint ribbon of trail switchbacks up the mountainside between volcanic boulders and prickly manzanita until it fades from view. An unseen bird calls, the only sound at all besides the crunching of boots.

It's midnight when I emerge from the forest atop a plateau beneath an infinite canopy of blackness and stars. The terrain ahead glows under the moon as if lit from within. Moving slowly, I cross a meadow and pass clusters of wizened mountain hemlocks. To the right something glimmers white, drawing me magnetically.

Soon I stand transfixed by reflected moonlight that sweeps across an alpine lake to the base of a snowy massif. A light breeze drops to nothing, ripples in the lake go still, and the light coalesces into the single dot of the moon, the water around the reflection so placid that it reveals the pinpricks of stars.

This view at Island Pass in California's High Sierra is sublime and rarely witnessed, too, though not for lack of hiker traffic. Every summer hundreds of people follow the route I'm hiking—the John Muir Trail (JMT), which runs for 211 glorious miles from the base of Half Dome in the Yosemite Valley to the top of Mount Whitney, the highest peak in the lower 48. En route are a dozen major passes, alpine lakes photographed by Ansel Adams, and granite whipped skyward like the surface of a giant lemon meringue pie. The trail is well loved—too well loved, if you value unbroken solitude in the wilderness. But almost nobody sees Island Pass like this, when scenery that's merely pretty during the day becomes downright magical at night.

I've made moonlit hikes before, out-and-back walks of only a few miles. Those jaunts were so memorable that I was inspired this past summer to tackle the entire JMT that way. My plan was to sync my movements to the rise and set of the moon, which would typically encompass late afternoon, dusk, and several hours of moonlit night.

This would be no expeditionary stunt, like unicycling to Everest. Night hiking, whether for 200 miles or just a couple, is something that many people are finding addictive. Hiking after hours, arguably more than any other way, would get me close to the wild heart of the Sierra—as John Muir himself experienced it.

Muir (1838-1914), hailed as an eco-hero and mountain messiah, was a bearded wanderer who spent years exploring the Sierra before coming down from the heights to successfully lobby for its protection. The first president of the Sierra Club, he worked to establish Yosemite as a national park and shaped the world's view

of what a protected wilderness could and should be.

Less well-known is that Muir wasn't naturally inclined toward advocacy; friends had to prod him to assert himself publicly. But his ability to share his passion for wilderness was organic. In a typically rapturous passage from his book *My First Summer in the Sierra*, he praised the Sierra's "domes and cañons, dark up-sweeping forests, and glorious array of white peaks deep in the sky, every feature glowing, radiating beauty that pours into our flesh and bones like heat rays from fire."

The Sierra still radiates beauty, but four million visitors now flood Yosemite every year—six times as many people as lived in the entire state of California when Muir first arrived in 1868. But most of them confine themselves to the relatively small Yosemite Valley. And the long swath of the range covered by the JMT—set aside in three national parks and four wilderness areas totaling over 3,000 square miles—is better protected from logging, grazing, and development than it was in the 19th century. As you hike the length of the trail, your feet touch a road only when you pass through Tuolumne Meadows.

What has changed over time are the people. Even JMT through hikers, a hardy lot going all 211 miles, are marshmallows compared to Muir. He didn't have a GPS, an 800-fill down sleeping bag, or three-course dehydrated meals. Instead, he spent hundreds of days wandering alone, off trail, without a map, a stale loaf of bread strapped to his belt for nourishment and a pine thicket awaiting him for a bed. Some of his feats were extreme. He logged the first recorded ascent of icy Mount Ritter and once charged a bear just to see how it would react. He was no adrenaline junkie, though. He merely wanted to get as close as possible to nature, to take in its untamed essence through his every pore.

A Muir-like connection to nature is harder to establish in an era when JMT hikers can check work e-mails or play sudoku on their iPhones. Hiking at night promised to get me closer to the earlier, wilder spirit of Sierra exploration. There would be more unknowns and less control—but an enhanced sense of discovery. Like Muir, I wanted to not just see the mountains but to feel them.

IT'S 7 P.M., AND THE SUN is rising over Yosemite. My friend Tom Colligan and I have set out on the opening stretch of the JMT in late afternoon, scaling a mountainside so steep that, from our increasingly elevated perspective, it appears that the sun is climbing from the western horizon rather than sinking. But time runs backward only for so long, and as we head northeast, color drains from the sky until it is ashen, then black.

I've timed the three-week-long trek to maximize the light of the moon, which will grow larger and stay up later each night. Tonight, though, a fingernail crescent provides only a few hours of illumination before retiring below the horizon. Dense forest crowds the trail, leaving only a band of starry sky visible above. I can't deny the obvious. It's dark. Really dark.

Hiking at night isn't as dangerous as it may sound, but it's probably not well suited for novice hikers. Even if you're experienced, plan on moving slowly—stumbling off the top of Half Dome or into a waterfall isn't likely, but twisting an ankle or getting lost is if you're careless.

I switch on my headlamp's red light, which gently illuminates obstacles underfoot but doesn't obliterate natural night vision. The

Below: Hiker Erik Stromberg wears a useful star-chart bandanna with glow-in-the-dark constellation diagrams for easy reference. **Left:** Author James Vlahos and a hiking companion pitched tents after dark, "when finding flat ground is tricky," Vlahos says. "You have to do it by braille."







The 211-mile John Muir Trail starts near the base of Half Dome in the Yosemite Valley.

minutes pass, and my latent superpower gradually kicks in: By starlight alone I can see. The formless darkness around the trail sharpens into looming columns of trees, each seemingly as thick as a Saturn V rocket. The stars become more numerous, variable, and bright to reveal the three-dimensional depths of the universe. The trail shows up as a pale stripe across the forest floor. “It feels like we’re just dreaming this,” Colligan says. “I think we’re both actually asleep in a ditch five miles back.”

The forest opens up to a grassy clearing. To the north a granite mountain arcs high into the Milky Way. The map lists Moraine Dome at 8,005 feet, but the mountain hulking before me is a larger, more mysterious presence than what any chart could convey. The vertical striations on the rocky face are vivid, while the forest below lurks in inky shadow. Muir appreciated how nighttime vistas such as this one were revealed artfully and selectively rather than with the bland equality of daylight.

“This evening, as usual, the glow of our camp-fire is working enchantment on everything within reach of its rays,” he wrote of a night in Yosemite. “Lying beneath the firs, it is glorious to see them dipping their spires in the starry sky...How can I close my eyes on so precious a night?”

After the openness of the clearing, the forest once again seems forbiddingly dark. But with vision imperfect, my other senses become hyperaware. A twig snaps somewhere off in the trees—too light to be a bear, probably a raccoon or deer. Next comes the fresh, green smell of water, followed minutes later by a

DURING THE AFTERNOON I SAW A HUNDRED HIKERS. NOW, AT NIGHT, THE PEOPLE ARE OUT OF SIGHT. I HAVE DISNEYLAND ALL TO MYSELF.

trickling sound. A stream must be close. Make that a river, as the trickle becomes a gush. The gush grows into the roar of water blasting against rocks—a major waterfall. I’ve seen plenty of waterfalls but never fully *heard* one until now, the sound suggesting a fearsome, animate presence. Muir believed that what we think of as fixed in the natural world is in fact the mutable creation of our perceptions.

Alter those perceptions by, say, hiking at night, and you can create a strange and wonderful new reality in your mind. “If the Creator were to bestow a new set of senses upon us...” Muir wrote, “we should never doubt that we were in another world.”

A WEEK AND A HALF LATER, hiking alone now, I follow Evolution Creek as it flows through lodgepole pine forests and skirts pale green meadows. Waterfalls plummet from cliffs on either side of the valley. After several flat miles the trail climbs nearly a thousand feet in a series of dusty switchbacks, then levels out as it enters the Evolution Basin in Kings Canyon National Park.

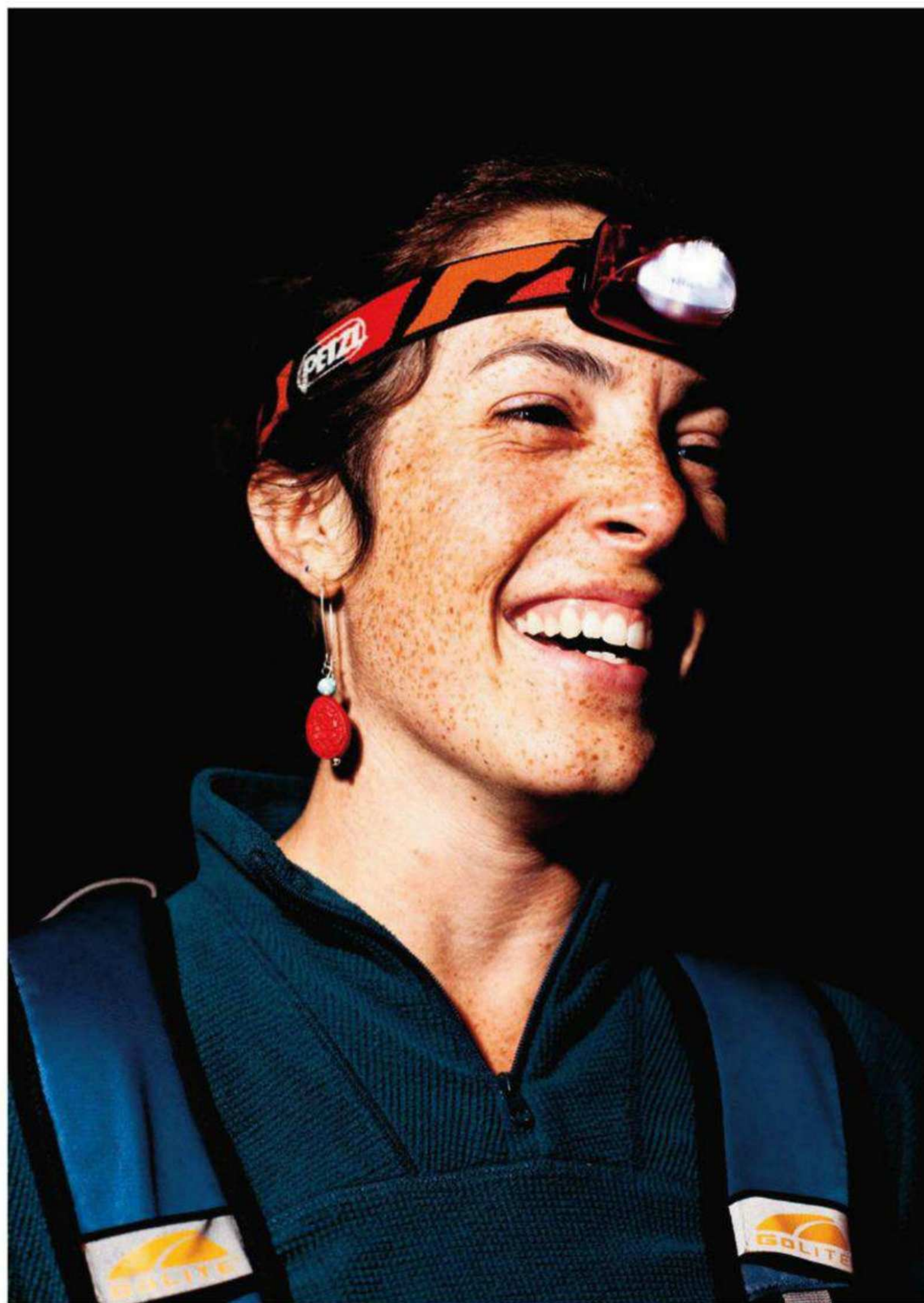
The basin is one of the most spectacular—and popular—parts of the JMT. During the afternoon I saw at least a hundred hikers, which made the hallowed terrain feel less like wilderness than like Sierra Disneyland. Now, though, at sunset, the people are out of sight, huddled around camp stoves and soon to be snoring inside tents. I tingle with a selfish thought: Nobody else in the world will see what I will tonight. I have Disneyland all to myself!

Peaks flank the narrow hanging valley. Carved millennia ago by glaciers, the basin today shelters a string of glimmering alpine lakes on benches that stairstep to Muir Pass, at just under 12,000 feet. As the sun melts into the horizon, the valley is flooded with light as rich and thick as syrup. I freeze in place. Every pine needle is tinged orange. The pinnacles blaze with fire. Only a few minutes later the show of alpenglow ends, peace following drama. As Muir memorably wrote of this transition: “The daylight fades, the color spell is broken, and the forest breathes free.”

The sky deepens to midnight blue. Evolution Lake is so still as to appear frozen. The night’s dramatic lighting stimulates my perception and imagination: The twin pyramidal mountains rearing up behind the lake suddenly look like temples erected for extraterrestrial worship.

As the JMT climbs, a brilliant light spears over a mountaintop to the east, suggesting imminent moonrise. But the brightness turns out to be from the warm-up act, Jupiter. Half an hour later the moon itself appears, too giant, bright, and full to be viewed directly. The moon will be my companion on a long overnight hike, just as it once was for

Left: Headlamps are needed for night hiking, “but you often see better with the light off,” Vlahos says, “letting your eyes adjust to the dark.” *Right, upper:* As he approaches Bear Creek in the John Muir Wilderness at night, Vlahos hears “the lively sound of water, banishing loneliness.” *Right, below:* A campfire—and prime rib—highlight a visit to the Tuolumne Meadows Lodge in Yosemite.







Muir. In *My First Summer* he recalls when “the full moon looked down over the cañon wall...as if she had left her place in the sky and had come down to gaze on me alone, like a person entering one’s bedroom.” To modern readers the passage might seem overwrought. But tonight I know exactly how he felt.

I climb into cratered, treeless terrain, with black, backlit peaks to the left, and gray, moonlit ones to the right. I hop from boulder to boulder over raging creeks, the moonlight-reflecting water the color of mercury in a thermometer. Nearing the pass, I lose the trail and clamber over rocks and stomp across crusty snowfields.

Finally, at nearly 4 a.m., I crest the pass. The stars and planets are close overhead; a savagely beautiful and uninhabited world lies below. Triumphant, I feel less a hiker than an astronaut.

HIKING AT NIGHT wasn’t my idea originally. It was Dan Duriscoe’s. He’s a scientist with the National Park Service who several years ago led me on my maiden night voyage in Colorado’s Great Sand Dunes National Park. We scaled glow-in-the-dark mountains of sand. We hunted for constellations over the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. And we admired our shadows on the dunes, cast by the light of Mars. That I could see so capably was a revelation, like discovering I had an extra hand. Duriscoe also gave me the gift of time—no longer would night always be wasted, not when the world’s most beautiful wildlands could be mine alone to explore.

Duriscoe lives in California, and in the waning days of my JMT trek, he meets me for a couple days of hiking. As we climb toward Mather Pass, he gestures west to a pointy summit. “That’s Observation Peak,” he says. “I once spent a whole night up there.”

On the peak, Duriscoe says, he experienced a “macroscopic” view of the universe. “I could see why rocks formed the way they formed, why plants grew the way they grew. I could see that the atmosphere was just a thin blanket, vital and life-enabling, wrapped around Earth.” He perceived that the universe was not a faraway abstraction but rather something that included our planet and him. No mere optical illusion, it was an existential revelation that would inspire his later scientific work.

Duriscoe is the co-founder of the park service’s Night Sky Team, devoted to protecting a natural resource that he believes



is as vital and majestic as the geysers of Yellowstone or the forests of Shenandoah. Vital—and threatened. Analyzing sky darkness using photo mosaics and customized software, Duriscoe and his colleagues have identified where artificial light is blotting out our view of the heavens over national parks. They’ve also singled out the darkest, least disturbed night skies in America, such as over Big Bend National Park in Texas or Capitol Reef National Park in Utah. Stargazing has connected mankind to the universe for millennia, and Duriscoe hopes to keep it that way.

We reach the crest of Mather late in the afternoon and look south over an expansive landscape known as the Upper Basin. The view could just as well be that of the Tibetan Plateau. The Basin is high, barren, and beautiful, dotted with lonely lakes; flanking the broad valley are rocky summits still patched with snow even at the end of July. We will explore this enticing terrain overnight, but for now Duriscoe is ready for a refreshment break. “Let me see that whiskey,” he says, reaching for my flask. A couple of sips later, he unleashes a wilderness epiphany. “Women, career, none of it matters! They’ve just tied me down, kept me from being out here!” His words are barbed, but his face looks content. “I’ve wasted my life on bullshit!” he says happily and sets off downhill.

LIGHTS OUT AT 6 P.M. Beeping watch alarm at midnight. The last night of the trip has arrived, and with it comes the climax of the JMT—climbing 14,494-foot Mount Whitney. For the last few days I’ve been joined by a friend from home, Erik Stromberg, and we hit the trail before other campers have even completed their first REM cycles.

From our campsite at Guitar Lake, a billy goat trail etched into the mountainside snakes upward. The route is precipitous and exposed with the ground underfoot as dark as the sky, making the hike feel like we’re going through the stars rather than below them. We hike past the Big Dipper and Cassiopeia, wind through Sagittarius and Scorpio, and head down the Milky Way.

In the dead of night conversation subsides, and the mind is content to wander. I’ve been reading Muir in my tent and think about the contrast between his earlier, more emotionally plaintive work and the later material, which can be scientifically stiff. Want to learn about, say, *Pinus lambertiana*, the sugar pine? The bard of the Sierra will give you several pages on that. Though his contributions to natural history were undoubtedly important—especially the evidence he found for Yosemite Valley’s glacial origins—his older writing is perhaps even more valuable. It reminds us that nature is not just rocks, trees, and species but also something more holistic with unequaled power to stir your soul. The takeaway for my own after-hours quest is that wilderness is not a place you go but a feeling you seek—electric, aware, beyond yourself, alive.

The time slips by as we walk in meditative rhythm, and after a couple thousand feet of steady climbing, we reach a key junction. To the right, the path drops down the eastern slope of the Sierra all the way to the exit trailhead—to Stromberg’s car, a pancake breakfast, and the trip home. To the left, the route climbs another two miles to the

DURISCOE KNOWS WHICH PARKS HAVE SKIES RUINED BY GLARE—AND WHICH PARKS STILL HAVE THE DARKEST SKIES IN AMERICA.

summit of Mount Whitney, the official finish line of the JMT. We turn left, hiking just below a ridgeline that leads to the summit. We pass craggy pinnacles separated by couloirs that seem to slice down to the eastern desert floor, more than 11,000 feet below.

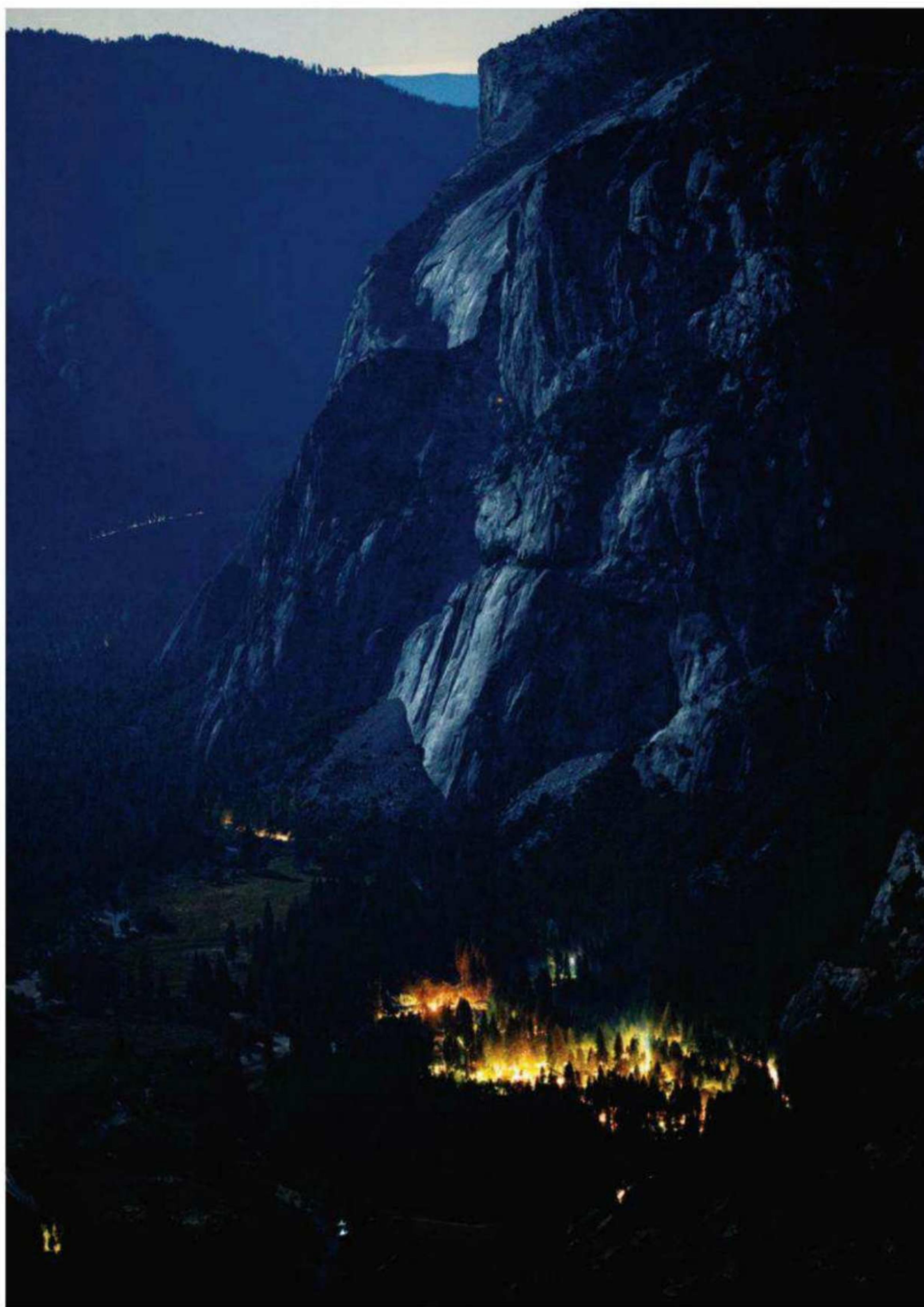
The horizon is brightening when we reach the summit, the stars fading. A jumbled procession of peaks marches northward under the purpling sky, and for a fleeting

moment I experience Duriscoe’s macroscopic view of creation. I imagine that I’m seeing every step of the JMT, over mountains, around lakes, and through forests, leading all the way back in space and time to Yosemite.

The plan had been to wait for sunrise, but after 20 minutes, I no longer feel the need. “Sunrises are overrated,” I tell Stromberg, reaching for my pack. “Let’s head down.”

Freelance writer JAMES VLAHOS, based in El Cerrito, California, has written for the *New York Times Magazine*, *Popular Mechanics*, *Outside*, and *Esquire*. This is his first feature article for *Traveler*.

Right: Ahwahnee Hotel, opened in 1927 and now a National Historic Landmark, glows on the floor of Yosemite Valley at dusk. **Left, above:** Author James Vlahos, at left, and friend Tom Colligan, who hiked with Vlahos for the first ten days of the journey, enjoy well-earned ice-cold brews. They’re resting at the Red’s Meadow General Store, a resupply stop popular with John Muir Trail hikers.



JULY 15-17 WATKINS GLEN, NEW YORK

Bottoms Up, Upstate At the Finger Lakes Wine Festival held at the Watkins Glen International raceway, local wineries pour samples of over 600 wines, while the blues-style Boogiemens and the acoustic rock cover band



Weekend Winos entertain. You can ride shotgun around the track in an official race pace car, stay late to see the opening night fireworks, or spend the weekend camping on the infield or the grounds surrounding the racetrack overlooking Seneca Lake. www.flwinefest.com

TRAVELER20

[TRAVEL-WORTHY EVENTS AND HAPPENINGS]

JULY 1

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

Blue Zone The Monterey Bay Aquarium's new permanent exhibit, "The Open Sea," debuts in six transformed galleries with tufted puffins, sandbar sharks, carnivorous black sea nettles, blooms of jellyfish, and schools of sardines. The million-gallon exhibit teaches visitors about the epic migrations of sea creatures and about the currents that are key to this vast ecosystem. Visit during a summer "Evening by the Bay" for extended hours with live music, wine, and tapas. www.montereybayaquarium.org

JULY 2 & AUGUST 16

SIENA, ITALY

Italian Horsepower Rivalries that date back to the 17th century are resurrected every summer during the Palio. Jockeys and horses representing ten of Siena's 17 *contrade* (town districts)—each with its own emblem, from snail to dragon—converge to race in Piazza del Campo. It takes less than 90 seconds for them to speed bareback around the piazza three times. The winner takes the *palio* (banner). Before the main event, a pageant of costumed flag-wavers wends through the historic center and into the piazza. www.ilpalio.org

JULY 2-AUGUST 5

BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS

Sweet Revelry Crop Over marks the end of sugarcane crop season. The festival began in the 1780s when Barbados was a world leader in sugar production. You needn't have labored in the fields to join in the party, which includes the ceremonial delivery of the last canes, the crowning of the king and queen from the season's best male and female cane-cutters, and the Grand Kadooment, a sun-splashed parade of costumes, dancing, and calypso and soca music. www.cropoverbarbados.com

JULY 5-7

ÉVORA, PORTUGAL

Musical Connection Every year,



JULY 11-17 CRESTED BUTTE, COLORADO

Bloomsdays Crested Butte earns its title as the "Wildflower Capital of Colorado" every summer when colombines, Indian paintbrush, lupines, and larkspur carpet the mountain meadows. Now in its 25th year, the annual week-long Wildflower Festival features mountain hikes, beginning to advanced photography classes, cooking lessons, and yoga classes held outdoors in alpine meadows. Executive director Sue Wallace especially recommends the 11-mile hike through the Maroon Bells Wilderness. www.crestedbuttewildflowerfestival.com

Portugal's Cadaval family presents the Évora Clássica Festival, a showcase of traditional music and culture from around the world in the 14th-century Dukes of Cadaval Palace. This year's event features acrobats from India, Sufi musicians from Morocco, and dancers from Burkina Faso wearing traditional "masks of the moon." The palace's Gothic church, with walls covered in early 18th-century azulejos—blue and white ceramic tiles—stages a cappella performances. Between

acts, explore the streets of Évora, a UNESCO World Heritage site dating back to Celtic times. www.palaciocadaval.com/festival.html

JULY 7

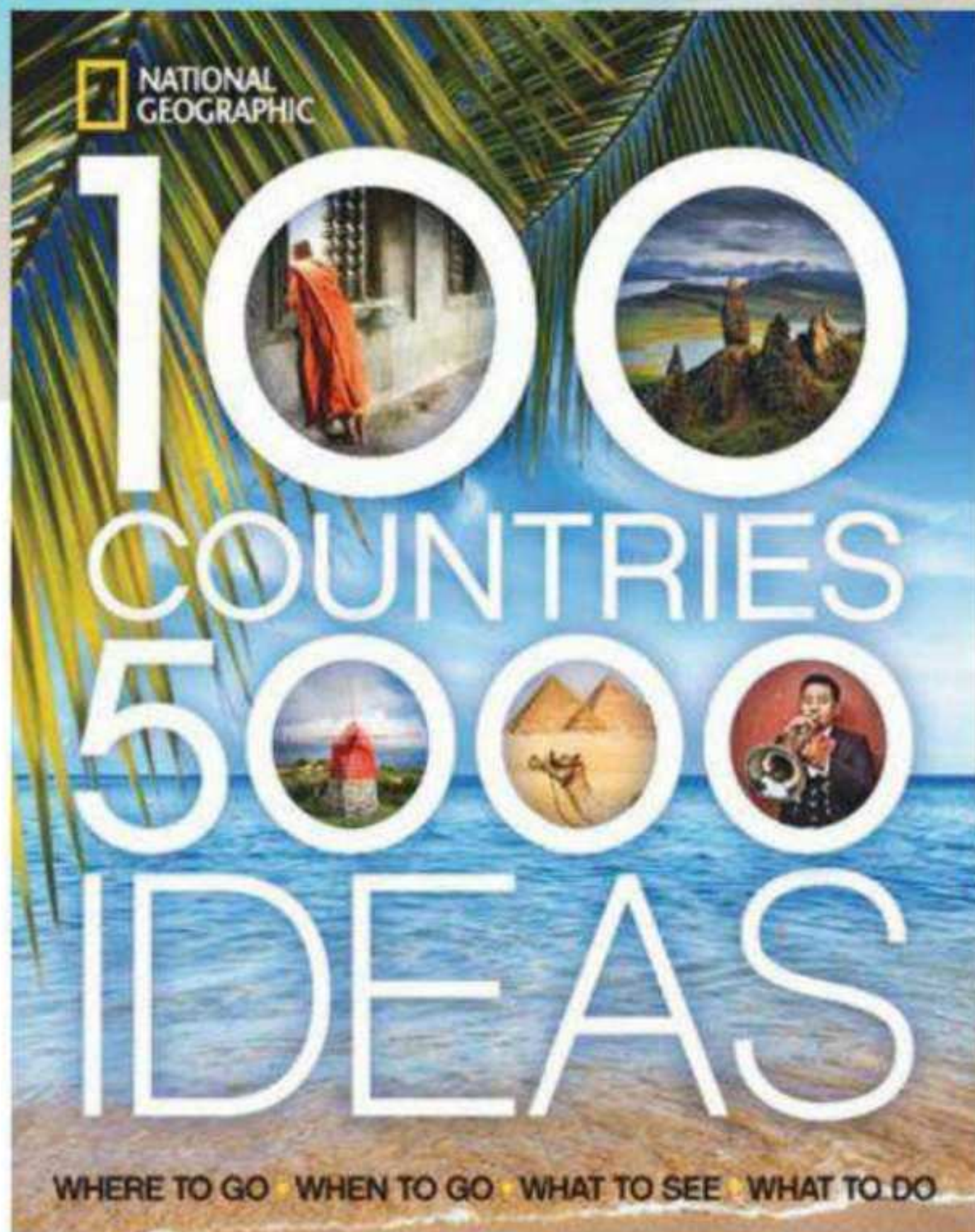
MACHU PICCHU, PERU

What Hiram Found The centennial celebration of Hiram Bingham's finding of Machu Picchu happens today (though the Yale University lecturer and historian came upon the ruins on July 24, 1911). The on-site party—which includes a light

and sound show and invited VIPs such as Bingham's grandchildren and Nobel Prize-winning Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa—has very limited entry to the general public. But you can tune in for the round-the-world broadcast of the day's events or visit the 365 recently repatriated artifacts (ceramics, jewelry) taken by Bingham and housed at Yale since 1912. They will be on display temporarily at Cusco's La Casa Concha museum. www.peru.travel/en/

SHANNON PISTOLE (UPPER), JAN RUNGE (LOWER)

Great Escapes



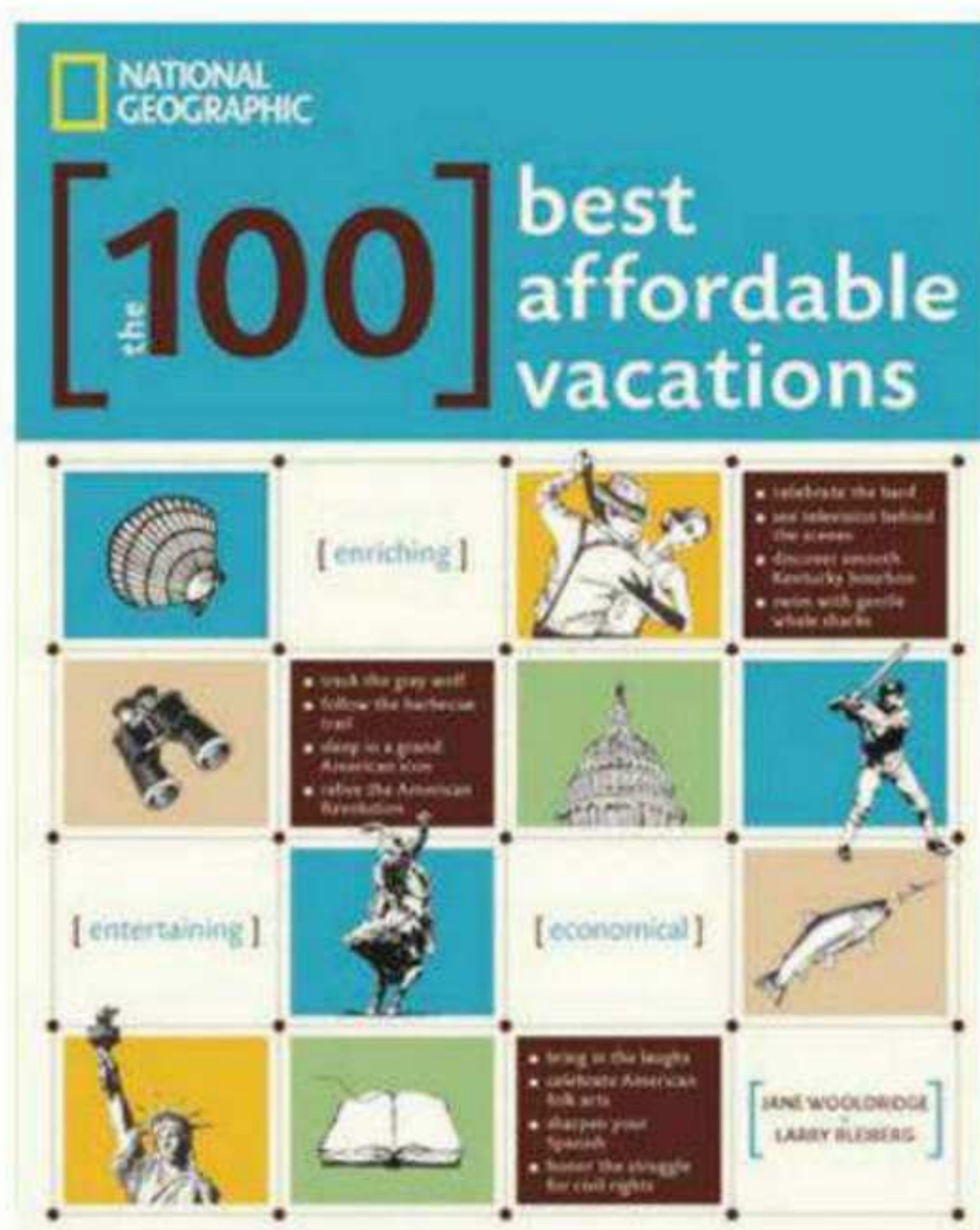
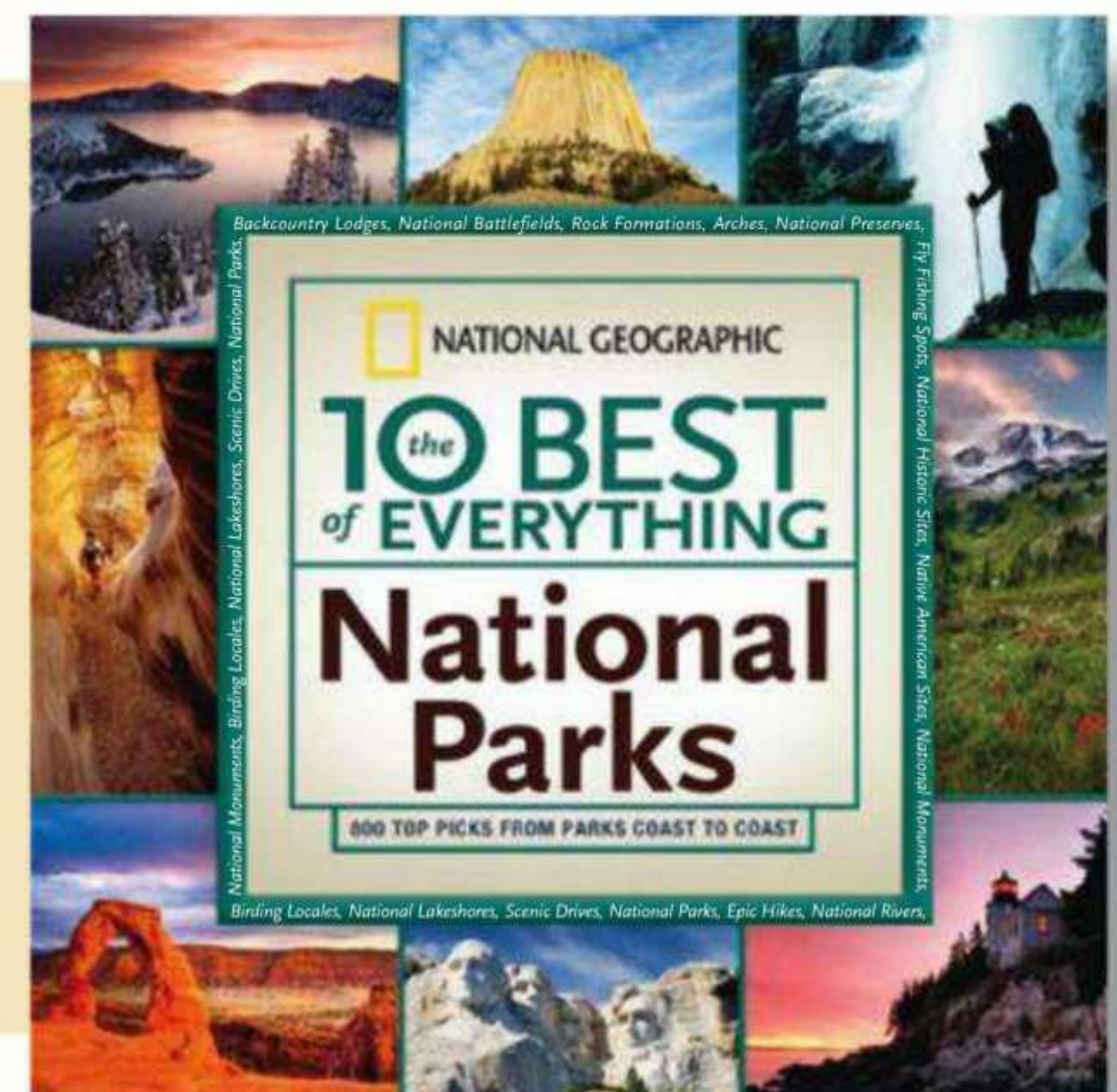
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The 10 Best of Everything National Parks

The latest guide in the popular *10 Best of Everything* series showcases what's great about hundreds of parks coast to coast. More than 80 "Top 10" lists feature natural wonders, wildlife, attractions, and activities, such as best waterfalls, sunsets, summits, megafauna, cave tours, trail runs, float trips, backcountry lodges, beaches, and beyond.

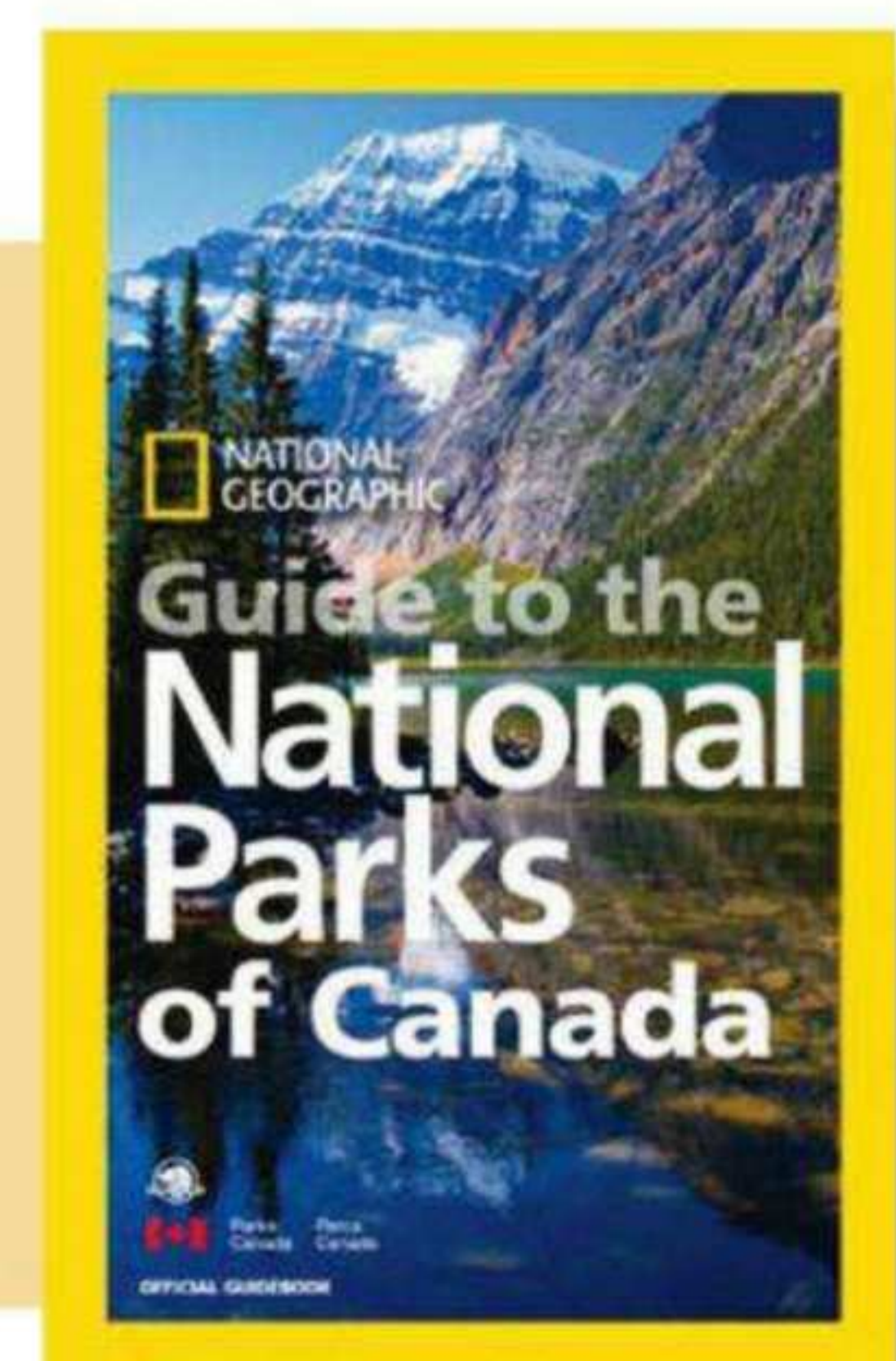


The 100 Best Affordable Vacations

Forget staycations. Here's a guide to 100 expert-vetted, guilt-free getaways that won't break the bank, from classic Americana, learning vacations, wilderness trips, and sybaritic excursions that nourish body, mind, and spirit (with a few splurge options along the way).

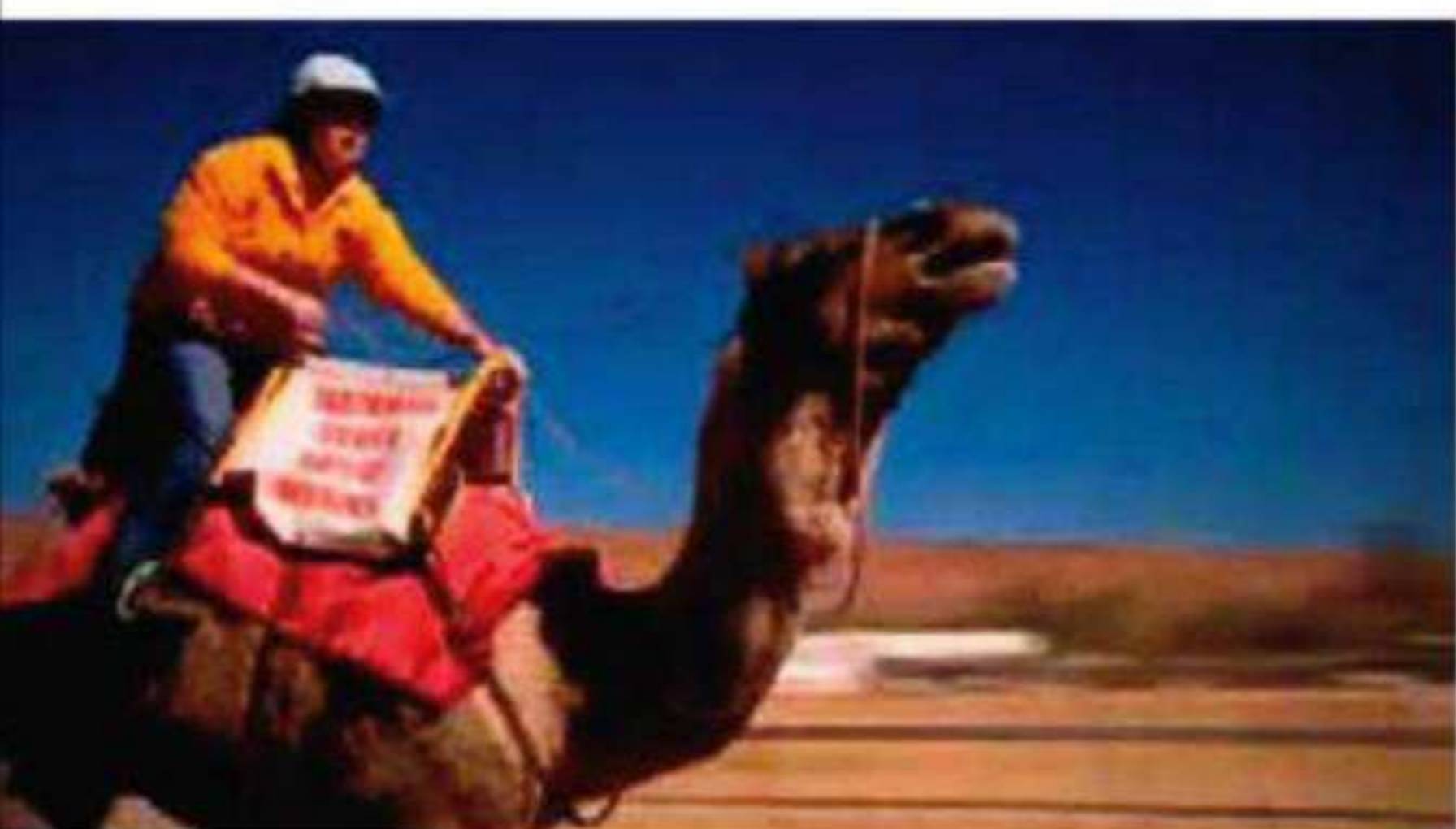
National Geographic Guide to the National Parks of Canada

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JULY 9

ALICE SPRINGS, AUSTRALIA

Hump Day Camels were first introduced to Australia in the 19th century to explore the outback and help build telegraph lines and railways. A camel-racing bet in 1970 between two friends evolved into the annual—and unpredictable—Camel Cup. At the start of each race, it's anybody's guess whether the animals will race ahead, veer off track, sit down, or back up. Young racers can try their hand at the Kids Kamel Kapers hobby camel races. Pairs compete in the Imparja Television Honeymoon Handicap, trading off at the halfway point. www.camelcup.com.au

JULY 11-13

THROUGHOUT MONGOLIA

Steppe Masters The national festival of Naadam celebrates a tri-fecta of sports central to traditional Mongolian culture: horseracing, wrestling, and archery. The Mongolian sense of community ensures that the games are not just for professionals—anyone can have a go. And brawny pursuits aren't the only activities taking place during the three-day event; arts such as throat singing and *morin khuur* fiddling are part of Naadam, too. www.naadam-festival.mn

JULY 14-31

TORONTO

Hot Hot Hot The Canadian city turns tropical every year during Caribana, when Toronto's several hundred thousand residents of Caribbean descent celebrate their heritage. The vibrant parties and concerts feature island music such as reggae and soca, the national music of Trinidad and Tobago. The highlight of the festival is the Caribana Parade, in which over a million people turn out to watch steel pan bands, calypso musicians, and masqueraders march through the city. www.caribanatoronto.com

JULY 15-17

ISLA MUJERES, MEXICO

Sea of Sharks Every summer, hundreds of endangered whale sharks, the biggest fish in the sea, glide along the coast of Isla Mujeres. Isleños and thousands of visitors greet the arrival of these gentle giants with a three-day carnival of traditional dancing, arts, environmental education, and local foods like chicken mole and *pan de cazón* (tortillas stuffed with shredded fish). But the best way to experience the fourth annual Whale Shark Festival is in the water. Guided group tours are available for adults and children (five and older) to

snorkel at a legally mandated distance among the 40-foot creatures. www.whalesharkfest.com

JULY 19

LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND

Magical History Tour The city famous for the Beatles, football, and the River Mersey ferry shares its story from prehistory to the present with the opening of the Museum of Liverpool. The modern building stands on the Pier Head—Liverpool's historic waterfront. Inside, you'll follow Liverpool's journey from sleepy fishing village to powerhouse global port. "The museum is all about telling the stories of the city and its people," says David Fleming, director of



JUNE 29-JULY 4 BOSTON

True Red, White, and Blue Home of the American Revolution, Boston is serious about Independence Day. The six-day Boston Harborfest explores the city's history through reenactments and site visits (Paul Revere's and Ben Franklin's homes). Eat traditional steamers on the beach, kayak the Harbor Islands, throw tea from the deck of a wooden sailing ship, and learn about the Great Molasses Flood. The best places to view the July Fourth fireworks are along the Charles River. Down by the bandstand along the water, you'll be serenaded with patriotic tunes courtesy of the Boston Pops. www.bostonharborfest.com

National Museums Liverpool. Fab Four exhibits include the Woolton church hall stage where Lennon and McCartney met in 1957. www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/mol

JULY 19-24

KEY WEST, FLORIDA

Papa Party Author and traveler Ernest Hemingway lived in Key West throughout the 1930s and wrote portions of some of his most famous works on the island. The island celebrates his life every year with Hemingway Days, featuring literary readings, a short story contest judged by Hemingway's granddaughter, and a three-day marlin tournament. Don't miss the look-alike contest, where dozens of portly, white-bearded men compete

to see who most resembles Papa. www.hemingwaydays.net

JULY 20-23

FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

Northern Olympics For the 50th year, the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics draw Eskimo-Indians from across Alaska and northern Canada for storytelling, dancing, and competition. Athletic events include the four-man carry, which involves one man transporting four others as far as he can to simulate bringing game back from the hunt, and the *nalukataq* (blanket toss), during which competitors flex a taut walrus skin to propel a jumper as high as 30 feet into the air, traditionally done to spot game. Special

zart operas abound during the annual Salzburg Festival in the town where the composer was born. This year, the nearly century-old festival also features both parts of Goethe's *Faust* and Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, along with operas by Verdi, Stravinsky, and Janacek. Most of the performances take place at venues in the baroque city center, a UNESCO World Heritage site. During the day, explore the lakes and mountains of the surrounding Salzkammergut region. www.salzburgerfestspiele.at/en

AUGUST 12-30

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

Body Language At the Tango Festival and Dance World Cup, held for the past 12 years in Buenos Aires, visitors are treated to seminars on the dance, tango-related films, and beginning or intermediate dance classes. At night, put those steps to work at a steamy electro-tango dance party. But the main spectacle remains the pros who pour their passion onto the dance floor as they step, swirl, and stomp their way through the semifinals and finals of the World Tango Competition. www.tangobuenosaires.gov.ar

AUGUST 21

PEMBERTON, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Tour de Farms During Slow Food Cycle Sunday, learn about the local food movement by joining a leisurely 50K bike ride along a flat and winding road north of Whistler. Fill your bike basket with goodies from farms; the route will take you through one of the most fertile areas in Canada, home to growers of everything from potatoes to tomatoes and kale. Along the way, there's even an artisanal vodka distillery. The annual ride drew nearly 3,000 cyclists last year. The local chamber of commerce helps organize a dinner and beer garden with bouncy castle for the kids during the week of the popular event. www.slowfoodcyclesunday.com

AUGUST 28

WASHINGTON, DC

A Dream Realized Martin Luther King, Jr., gets his own memorial in the nation's capital, located on a direct line between the Lincoln Memorial, where he delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech, and the Jefferson Memorial. Visitors walk among massive rocks symbolizing the uphill struggle for civil rights before coming upon a 30-foot sculpture of MLK hewn out of stone. A 450-foot inscription wall will feature more than a dozen Dr. King quotes engraved in granite. The dedication ceremony—scheduled on the 48th anniversary of the March on Washington—will involve speeches and a post-ceremony concert in West Potomac Park. www.mlkmemorial.org

Reported by Alison Brick, Karen Carmichael, Caitlin Etherton, Juliana Gilling, Meghan Miner, and Meg Weaver.

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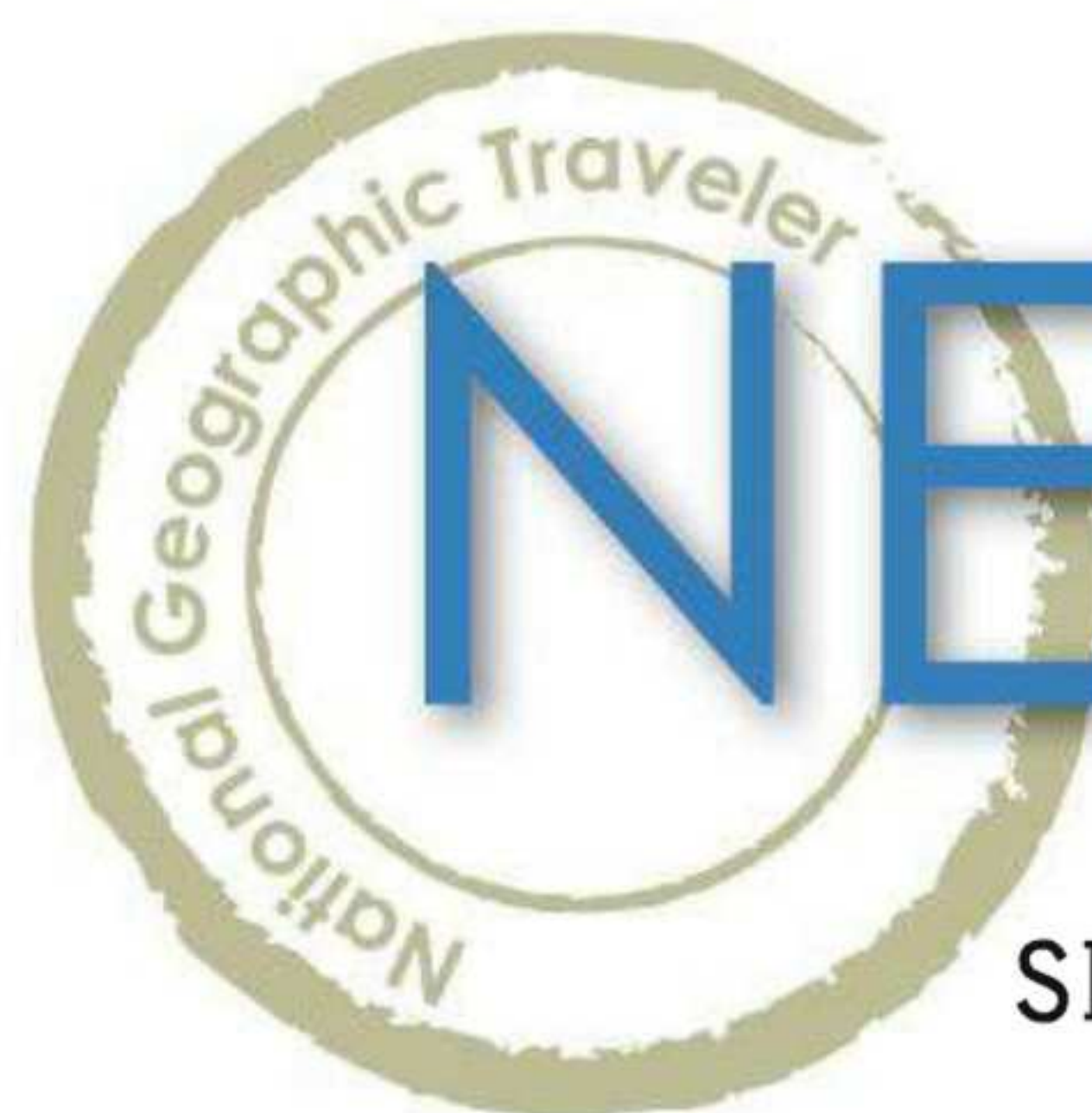
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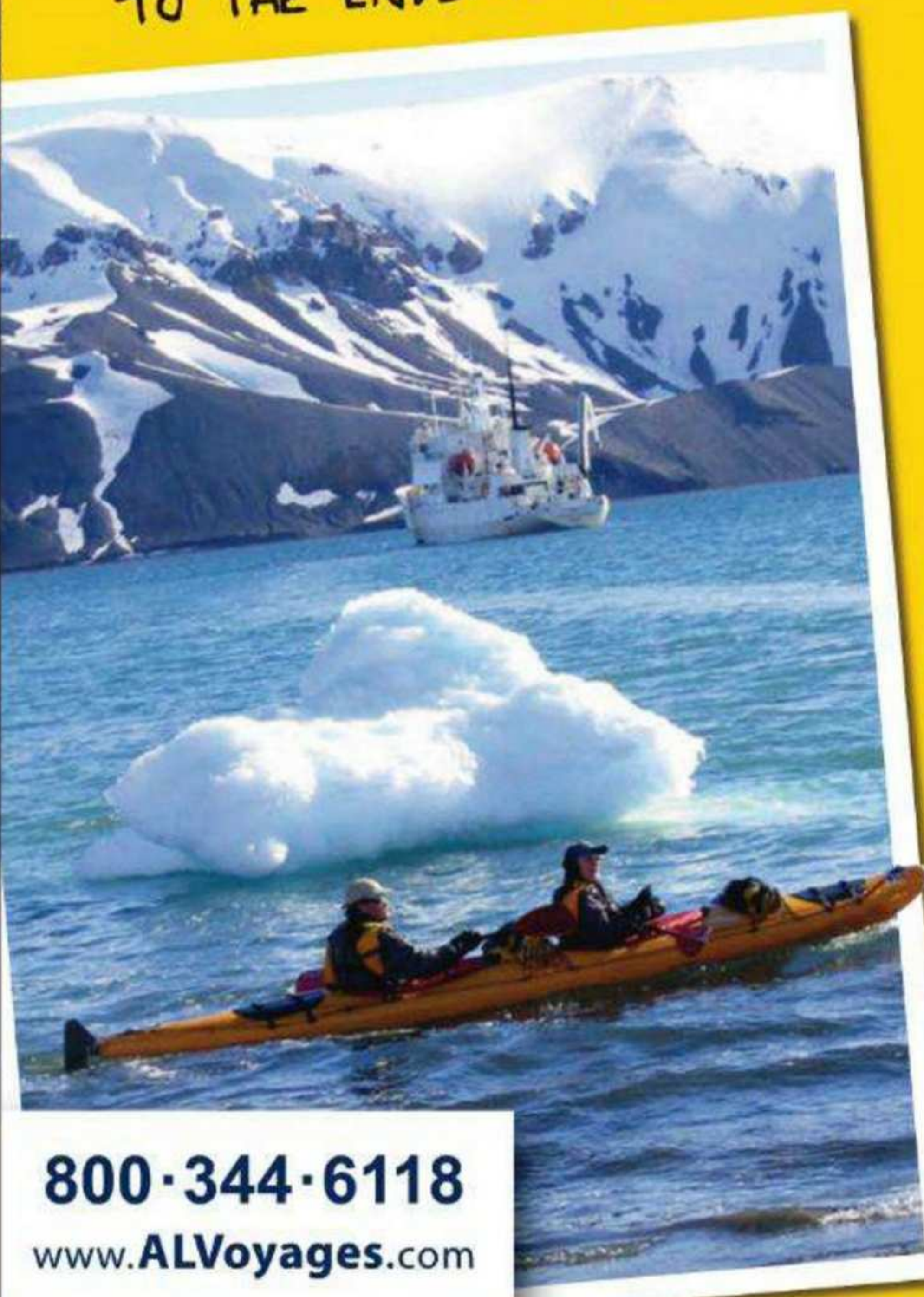


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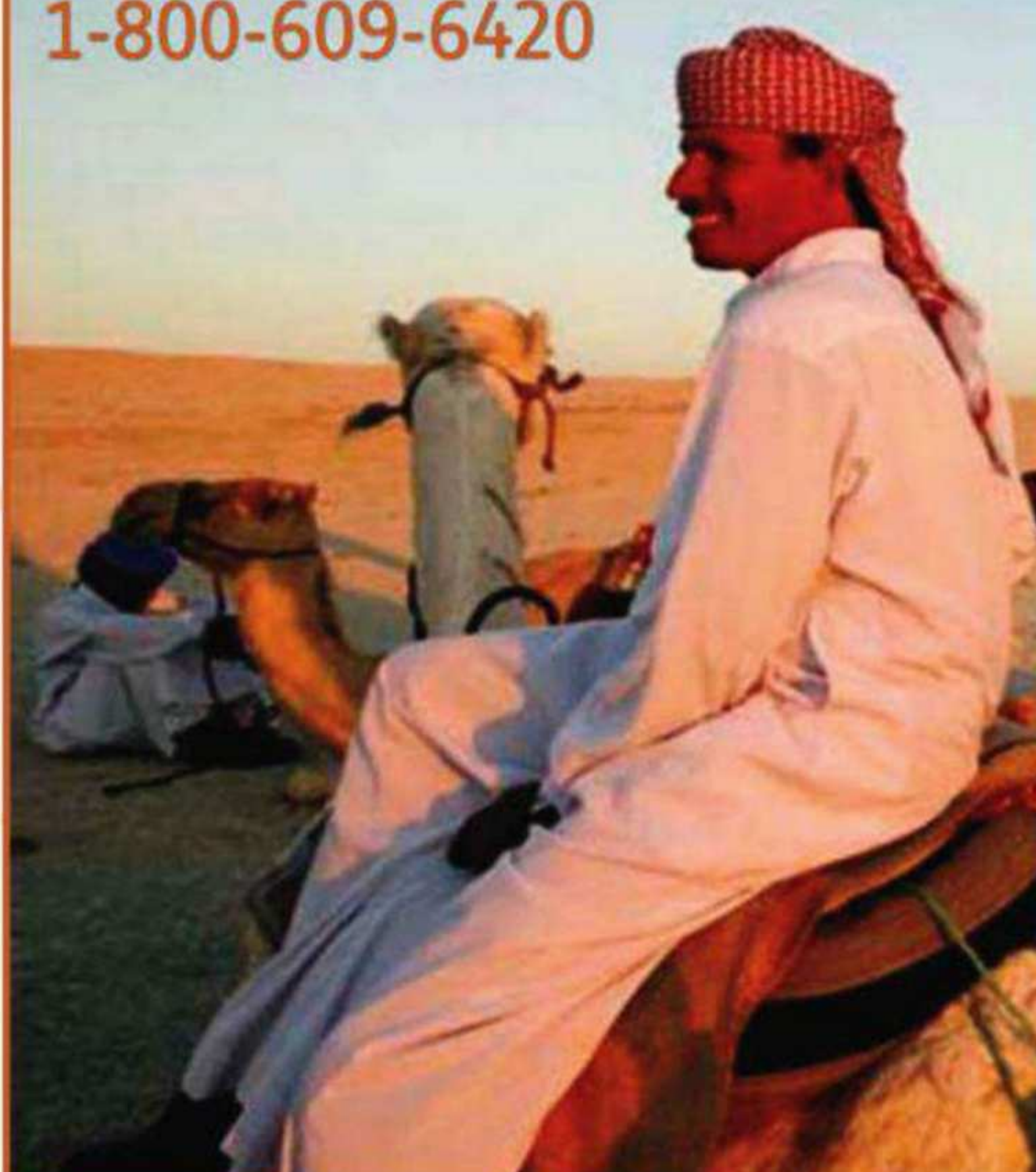



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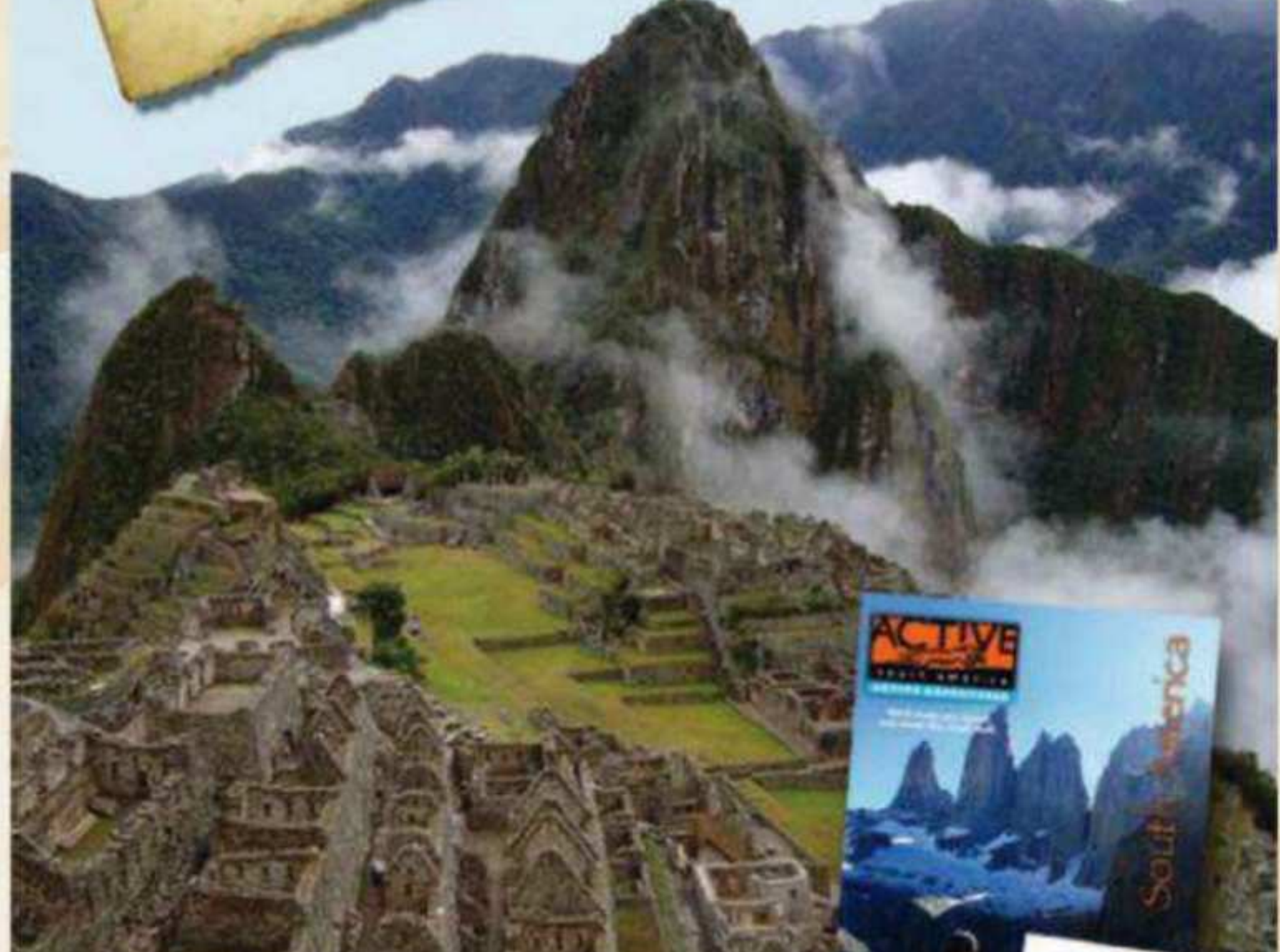



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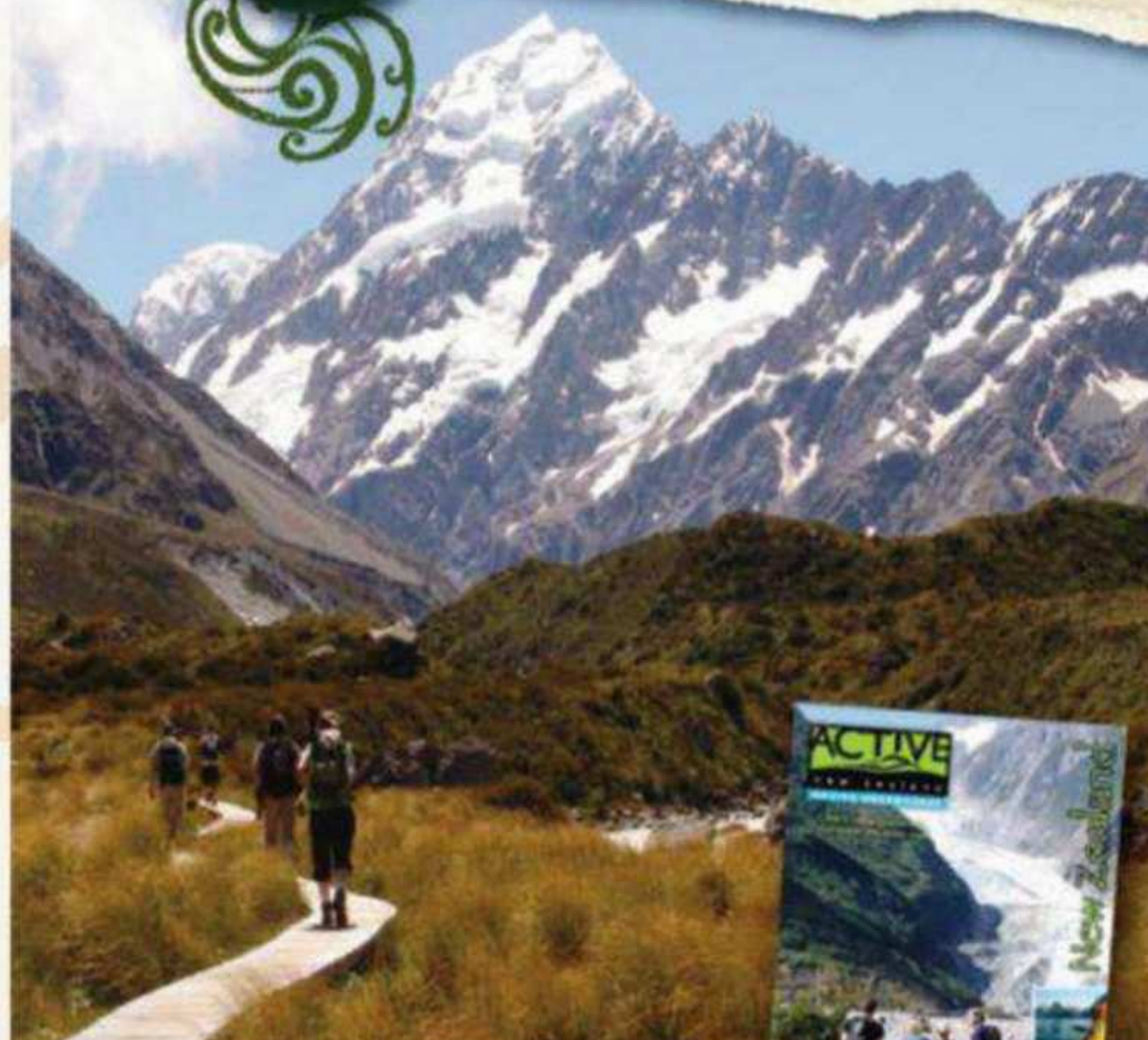
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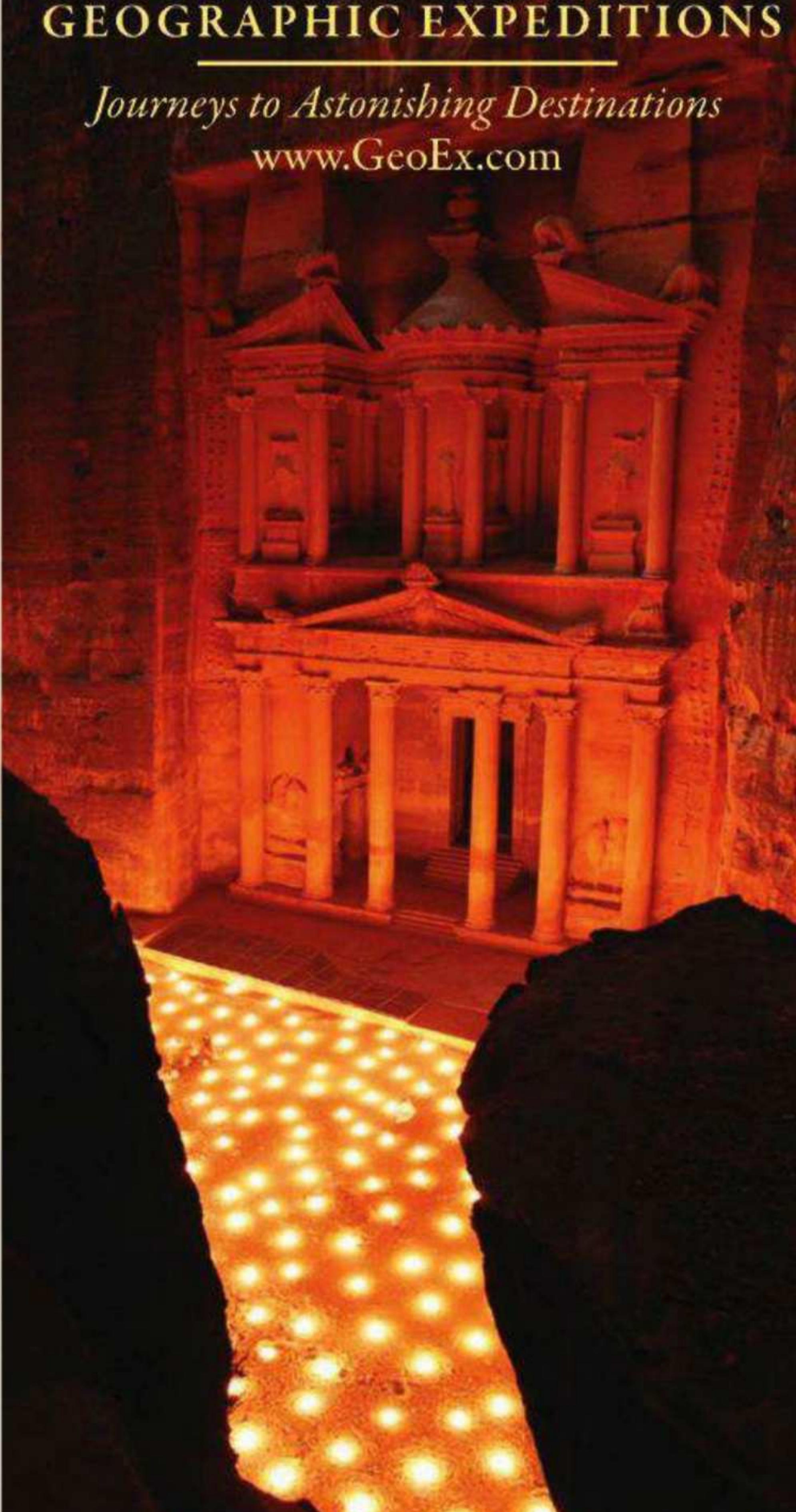




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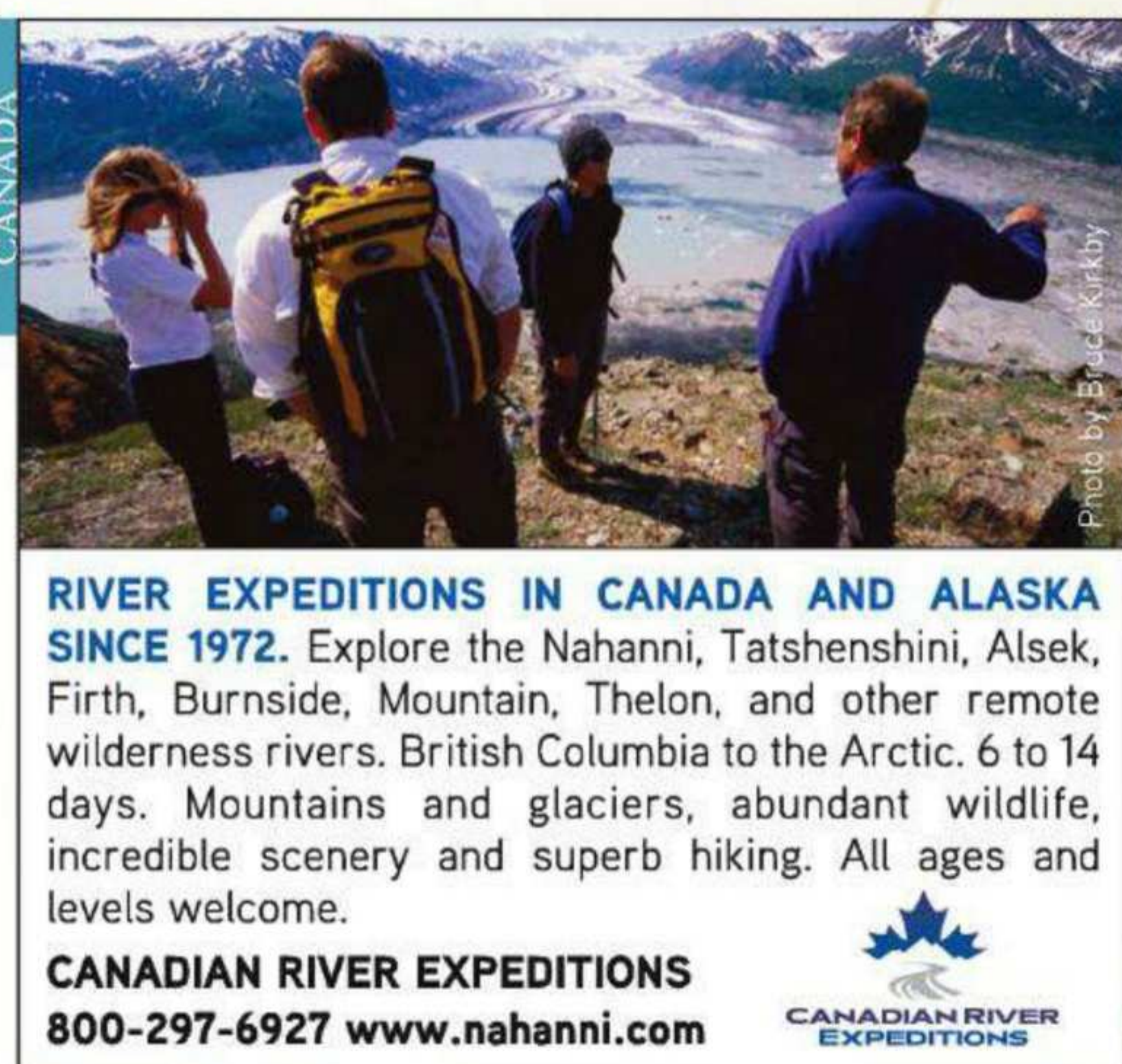
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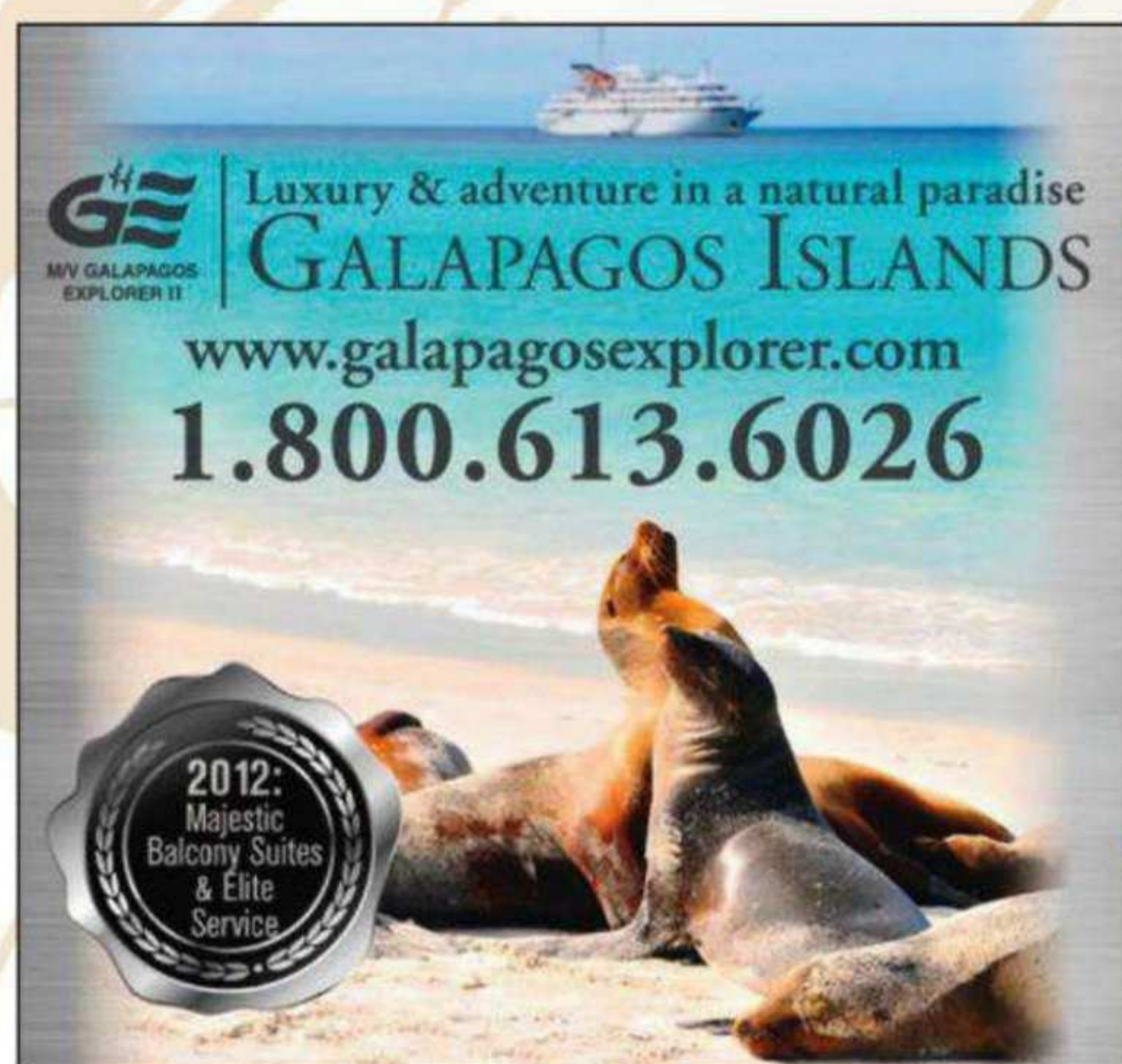
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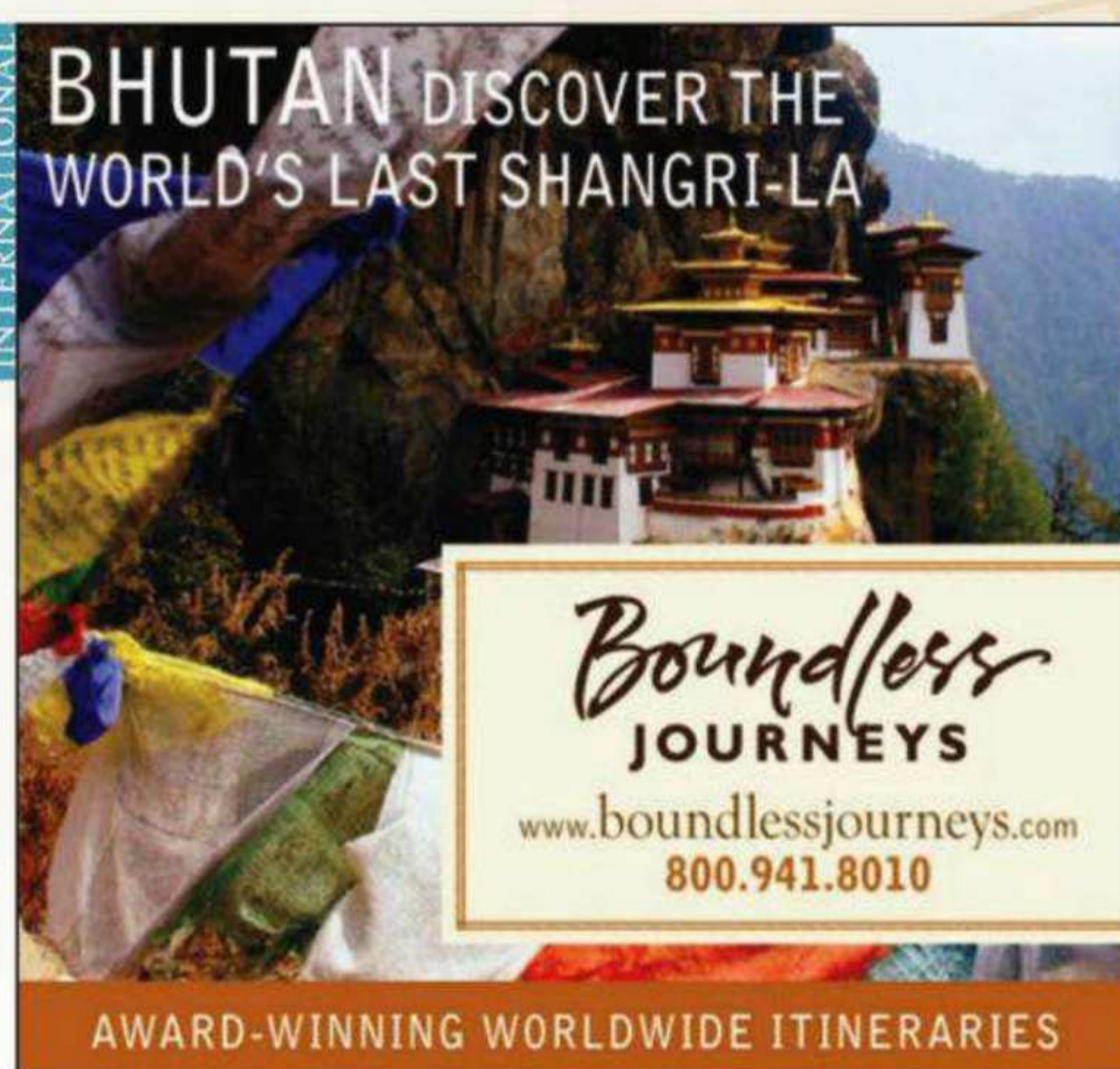
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Warm Kebabs for a Cool City

Photograph and text by Carsten Bockermann

LAST AUGUST I went on a short trip to Frankfurt, Germany. After walking around the busy financial district all day, I crossed to the southern bank of the Main River just before dusk. The atmosphere there is very relaxed, with cyclists, joggers, and people just out for a stroll—quite the opposite of the frenetic activity I had seen during the day. This döner boat caught my eye because, while these kebab stands that serve flatbread overflowing with meat and vegetables are everywhere in Germany, I had never seen one on a boat. The Turkish owner, Ramiz Meral (*pictured here*), says it took him almost two years to get a permit from the city. The photo shows the cultural diversity of modern-day Germany. Frankfurt has the second highest percentage of foreign-born residents in the country—behind Offenbach. The photo also juxtaposes this tiny enterprise with the big businesses in the background, aided by the contrast in lighting—warm and cozy in the kebab stand, cool around the financial district. Looking back at the city as the sun set provided a fresh view for me. The kebab was pretty good, too.

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